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FEATURE STORY

AFTER THE GERMAN SPIES..

BY MAY HALSEY MILLER

Read "THE CLUE IN THE BOX," by Alexander Douglas, Out in Our Next Issue

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

FEATURE STORY — PAGE

AFTER THE GERMAN SPIES, by May Halsey Miller 1

SERIAL STORY

SOME SCRAPS OF PAPER, by Police Captain Howard 38

SHORT STORIES

THE TWO WIDOWS, by a Scotland Yard Detective.. 26
THE GREEN-GOODS MAN, by Barney Bly..... 31
THE CLUE OF SILVER, by a Private Detective.... 34
STORIES OF GREAT DETECTIVES (Max F. Schmittberger), by a New York Journalist..... 36

MISCELLANEOUS MATTER

Origin of the Curfew-Bell..... 33
Hindu Magic Exposed..... 33
Pearls of History..... 37
Typewriter First Invention of Three Men..... 37

CURRENT NEWS

Difficult Operation—Saved by a Bible—Birds Ride on Trains—Facts About Watches—A Growing Fence—Cave-Dwelling Snakes—A Novel Method—Turtle, 1,000 Years Old, Caught and Freed—Rats Wiser Than Men—Curious Behavior of Animals in War—Wooden Cannon Still Useful—A Curious Phenomenon..... 42

AFTER THE GERMAN SPIES

A STORY OF DETECTIVE WORK DURING THE WAR

By MAY HALSEY MILLER

CHAPTER ONE

THE SURPRISING CONTENTS OF A BOTTLE

GILBERT RICHARDSON, private detective, fairly rushed through his business one morning in order to meet Doris Cameron at Van Cortlandt Park, as they had arranged the previous evening. He scarcely stopped for his lunch. It was a very busy period, just before war was declared on Germany. Civilians were being enlisted to aid the government to keep watch on people whose strict neutrality was doubted, and Richardson's firm had been employed by the federal authorities to keep an eye on alien enemies.

It was one of those winter days when flooding sunshine, blue skies and bracing air send the blood racing through the veins.

"The ice should be in fine shape," Richardson muttered, as he swung up the avenue. "That freeze last night should make it smooth and hard."

He glanced at his watch, and was soon in front of the boathouse, where he was to meet Doris. He knew just where she would be, for she never kept him waiting. He did not slacken his pace till he suddenly saw her engaged in animated conversation with two young men. Then he stopped so suddenly as to cause two girls that were following close behind him to step on his heels.

Doris Cameron was the kind of girl that any man would naturally like, for she was healthy, young, full of vitality, and distractingly pretty. The two young men, with whom she was so agreeably engaged, were both good-looking, although of entirely different types. One was tall, slender, with an erectness of bearing that gave him an air of distinction. He had a small mustache that curled

upward toward a pair of very bright blue eyes. The other was of heavier build, slower action, and had the dark complexion of the Orient. He had clear olive skin, large orbed, almost black, eyes, and a delicate, silken shading of the full red lips.

Both were attired so correctly that it made Richardson acutely conscious of the fact that he had forgotten to have his shoes shined. His hand instinctively went to cheek and upper lip, to feel if his beard had made an unexpectedly rapid growth.

Doris glanced his way just then, and her flash of recognition hastened his steps in her direction

"Mr. Richardson, I want you to meet two old friends, Mr. Koerner and Mr. Rabanath. We were acquainted at college. Mr. Koerner is the son of my old German professor, and Mr. Rabanath is studying social conditions here—specializing in economics. Mr. Richardson is also a very busy gentleman, for he is in the government service, and can steal off only once in a blue moon to enjoy himself. Now that I have vouched for all, I want you to be good friends."

The three men were responding to the introduction with outward cordiality, but Richardson's heartiness was only of manner. He decidedly resented the appearance of the two young men whom he regarded as interlopers, especially on that particular day, when he had schemed to have Doris all to himself. It is needless to say that he loved her.

His dissatisfaction, however, was quickly dissipated. The young men excused themselves on the plea of a pressing engagement and, with the politely-expressed hope of meeting Doris again, took their departure.

Doris dismissed them with a smile, and then gave her undivided attention to Richardson. They were both adept at skating, and soon found themselves the objects of attraction to a crowd of less proficients, as they glided away to the outskirts of the lake. Both were good skaters, and made most of the time until they perceived that their shadows stretched long and narrow, and that the glory was swiftly fading from the skies.

"We must go home," Doris warned him.

"Very well. Head across the lake."

She gave him her hands, and they sped with the wind. They did not feel its nipping keenness until they turned and faced it, but it only deepened the color in the girl's cheeks, while the golden-brown eyes that met his so frankly said all sorts of unutterable things that set his heart thrilling. Oblivious of the fact that there were other couples on the ice under the same sweet obsession, there was a sudden collision between Doris and another girl. Had not Richardson caught Doris in his arms, she would have been hurled to the hard, frozen surface. He held the soft palpitating form close to him for several delicious seconds while she recovered her breath. Then she disengaged herself from his arms and, with an embarrassed little laugh and a convulsive gasp, shook herself as if to be assured she was still in one piece.

"I'm almost famished!" she remarked.

He looked at her as through a haze. What was food at such a moment?

"Where shall we go?" he finally asked.

"Oh, I wasn't hinting for a treat," she exclaimed, laughing. "I meant that I must go home to dine."

"I don't see why I should be crowded out," he protested.

"Come home with me then, and we'll have a cup of chocolate."

He shook his head dubiously.

"I have to go back to the office to work on a case. I thought there was a place around here where we could get something to eat."

"There is a little tea-room on the avenue. I go in there sometimes. It is a cozy place."

"That sounds good to me."

They were already on the ice's edge, and he stooped to remove her skates, while she rested one hand on his shoulder. He felt himself obliged to look up into the sweet laughing face so frequently that the removal was a deliberate one. Then he had to take off his own skates, and all the while the sun was drooping silently toward the horizon. and electric lights were beginning to multiply.

He slipped his hand under her arm, and they started for the tea-room.

It was all Doris claimed.

They sat in a secluded corner of the warm, softly-lighted room, Richardson ordering so extravagantly that Doris protested.

"It comes from my not paying due respect to luncheon," he responded gravely, "and also to the fact that it will have to take the place of dinner, for I must make up for the wasted time I have spent with you this afternoon."

"Wasted time?" she breathed provocatively.

He did not answer in words, but let his eyes rest lingeringly on the fresh sweet face rising above the white throat that still showed the delicate lines of girlhood. She had taken off both cap and sweater in the warm coziness of the room.

It was dark when they finally emerged into the street, that is, as dark as New York streets are ever permitted to be. He walked with her to the corner of the avenue on which she lived, and even then was loath to part with her.

"I shall never forget this afternoon," he said, as he held her hand. "When shall we have a repetition?"

"I go every afternoon while the ice lasts," she answered, withdrawing her hand from his.

"Fortunate girl, not to have to do the things you don't wish to."

She shook her head.

"You oughtn't to talk like that. You are serving your country. It needs all her sons and daughters now to keep us out of this horrible war. How I should like to be doing something really worth while!"

"You are interested in Red Cross work, and all that sort of thing?"

"Oh, yes; but I would like to be doing a great big bit instead of a little one. I haven't the patience to knit, and the double-woven machinery garments are warmer than the sweaters we are weaving with slow fingers. I want to do something really worth while. I am no trained nurse. I have no money to contribute, or even to support myself on while I am working, and father won't listen to my going across the ocean. I would like to go to Belgium, and help those poor children. It is dreadful! I can't bear to read about them, yet I devour everything that comes in my way that relates to them!" she sighed deeply.

"If I call you up the first day I can steal away again, will you meet me on the lake?"

"Certainly!" assented the girl.

There was no further excuse for lingering, so Richardson lifted his hat and turned reluctantly away, glancing back to see the slight form hastening off in the dancing shadows of an electric light.

As Doris ran up the steps leading to the house, the front-door opened and another girl emerged.

"Oh, Doris; back at last. I've been waiting an age for you! Surely you've not been skating all this time!"

"Hello, Natalie. Come back into the house."

"Can't now; am expected home. What kept you so late? I waited till the very last instant."

"Stopped for chocolate and scones."

"Then you weren't alone?"

"No."

"Well, you needn't be so mysterious about your companion. Who was it?"

"Gilbert Richardson, the detective, as you're so anxious to know."

"Oh, that handsome fellow! You lucky girl!"

Doris laughed. Her blood was still tingling from the looks received from a pair of keen gray eyes.

"Why didn't you let me know, and I'd have gone, too; though, as a rule, I don't care for skating; the weather is always too cold," and she nestled her chin into her fur stole, and put up a big muff to shield her face from the wind that was beginning to bite quite sharply.

"Wait till next summer, and then go to the rink," suggested Doris. "I'm going every afternoon as long as the skating lasts. You may go along, if you wish."

"Gilbert Richardson going, too?"

"Couldn't say," responded Doris, briefly. "He's to call me up when he gets a chance," she added.

"Then call me up when he does, and I'll make one of the party, and in order not to be the crowd, I'll bring some one along."

"All right; I'll let you know!"

Natalie Fairbanks was the opposite type from that of Doris Cameron, being small, dark, and with a personality that challenged attention. Her face possessed an undefinable charm, although most of her friends denied her all claim to beauty. She had a way of attracting people, especially young men, whose society she preferred to that of her own sex. Doris was her only close girlfriend.

But Doris was not particularly fond of Natalie.

The next morning, Doris was called to the telephone. She took up the receiver, confidently expecting to hear the voice of Richardson telling her that he was going to snatch a couple of hours off that afternoon. Instead, she recognized the voice of Gustave Koerner, asking if she would be at the park lake that afternoon.

Doris told him she would, but hung up the receiver with a feeling of disappointment. Why hadn't it been Gilbert?

Not only Koerner, but his friend, the East Indian, were awaiting her arrival when she appeared on the ice with Natalie. As Miss Fairbanks was also acquainted with the son of their German professor, she had gladly accepted the invitation to make one of the party, and was by no means sorry when she saw that there was to be a fourth member—the handsome young East Indian, who straightway devoted himself to her, leaving Doris to the company of Koerner.

They had skated an hour or more, when Koerner, having some trouble with one of his skates, bent over to readjust it. As he leaned down something fell from his inside pocket, and Doris, thinking that the young man had not observed the fact, stooped to pick it up. Before she had time to reach it, Koerner had risen, his face pale and strained.

"Don't you touch it!" he shouted hoarsely; and seizing the surprised girl by the hand, he fairly dragged her away.

There came a puff of black smoke, a heavy detonation, followed by a shower of broken ice. Where the little object had fallen was a gaping hole!

CHAPTER TWO

DORIS MAKES A TERRIFYING DISCOVERY

KOERNER'S sudden and almost violent action nearly threw Doris to the ground. When she recovered her equilibrium, and looked for the German to ask an explanation, he was nowhere in sight. The noise brought up a crowd of eager questioners who, fortunately, paid no attention to Doris, who was still half-dazed. Before she had time to tell what had happened, the East Indian and Natalie arrived. The latter wanted to know what had happened, but Rabanath, ignoring her completely, took Doris gently by the arm, and said in his soft, rich voice:

"Let us get out of this crowd."

As Doris glanced at him, she was struck by the pallor of his face, but otherwise he gave no appearance of fright.

"What was it?" asked Doris, as they skated away from the crowd.

"Tell me first what happened," he said.

"I hardly know myself. Something dropped out of Gustave's pocket that exploded with a terrific report, and then he disappeared! What could have happened to him?"

"Oh, nothing, Miss Doris. He is all right. The little bottle that fell out of his pocket contained a very powerful chamical."

"Why was he carrying it around with him?"

"Because he did not dare to leave it anywhere, just for fear of its exploding. His father has just given up his professorship, and is now devoting himself to laboratory work. His hobby always was chemistry, and now he has a laboratory of his own and is experimenting. He asked Gustave to get him a small quantity of a certain substance that is very difficult to procure, and cautioned him to be very careful. I am sorry he has lost it, for it may be impossible to get another supply."

Doris accepted the explanation, which did not account for Koerner's sudden disappearance. She proposed going home, as she said she was tired.

Rabanath made no objection, and did not even offer to walk home with the two girls, much to Natalie's disappointment. As Doris was about to enter her house she met her mother and sister, who were attired for an afternoon function.

"Where have you been, Doris?" asked her mother somewhat fretfully.

"Skating," was the brief reply.

"I do wish you cared for something besides outdoor sports. Edna and I are going to a recital, and I had hoped you would go with us."

"But you know I don't care for such things," said Doris.

"You might, to please me; but you don't care anything about what I want. You think only of yourself."

Doris made no reply to this. She was accustomed to similar complaints. Her mother did not want her to live her own life, but rather that of the ordinary society girl, whose main object is the pursuit of pleasure.

As she was about to go upstairs to her room, a door opened at the back of the hall, and a man's voice asked:

"Is that you, Doris?"

"Yes, father."

"Where have you been? You girls and your mother are always out when I am in."

"I was skating, father."

"Whom with?"

"Oh, that Indian student I told you about, and Gustave Koerner."

"I don't want you have anything to do with Germans. First thing you know we will be in trouble."

"But we are not yet in war with Germany, or any other country, father."

"We may not be at war with Germany, but she is with us, and I suspect every mother's son of them in this country, what with the blowings up of munition plants, grain elevators, and the hiding of bombs on vessels! Remember, I don't want you to have anything to do with Koerner or any other German."

"But Gustave was born in this country, and calls himself an American."

"He may call himself what he pleases, but that doesn't compel me to believe him." With that the door closed, and Doris continued up to her room, resentment in her heart, and a frown on her face.

"I can't live my own life in this house, or have the friends I want," she muttered rebelliously. "I sometimes wish I could get away, and be independent!"

That night at dinner, Mrs. Cameron asked Doris to go to the headquarters of the committee in charge of an immense bazaar that was being arranged in aid of the war sufferers. Mrs. Cameron and her daughters were much interested in it, and Doris promised to go.

Before she left the following morning, a telephone call came, which proved to be from Koerner. As her father had left for his office, and her mother had made no objection to her friendship with the German-American, she chatted a moment or two on different subjects, until he asked when he might see her.

"I shall be awfully busy this afternoon," she replied, "and can't just say when I shall be at home. Just now I am about to go downtown, but shall stop at the library to return a book. I'll be there in about fifteen minutes."

"I'll be on the steps," he said. "Don't keep me waiting, if you can help it, for I have another pressing engagement."

An hour later she found him on the library steps, and he walked with her to the committee's offices. They talked of the coming bazaar, and he told her that Rabanath had a number of Indian curios that he was going to contribute. He added that he had a number of curious things that some of the interned Germans had sent him.

"I have several friends among them, all friends of my father's, and often go down to see them," he remarked.

"That's fine!" exclaimed Doris. "There ought to be a big sum taken in."

"If you would like to see the articles before we send them, I'd be glad to show them to you."

"Where are they?"

"In the studio building where Rabanath and I live. They are on private exhibition. Lots of ladies have been in to see them."

"Are you going to be busy this afternoon?"

"No. I could be at my place, if you care to drop in. Why couldn't you and Natalie take charge of a booth?"

"I think my mother is expecting me to help with hers," replied Doris quickly, knowing that her father would not consent to her presiding over a booth under German auspices.

"Oh, well, perhaps that could be arranged later. But, I say, you're looking stunning these days, Doris. You have all the other girls beaten as regards looks!"

Doris flushed, not at all displeased at his broad admiration, yet somewhat disturbed by its being so outspoken, and an intangible expression in his expressive blue eyes.

"You've got some good looks yourself," she parried.

"Enough to please you, Doris?" he asked, slipping his hand through her arm, and pressing it close to his side.

"Oh, a girl wants something more than good looks in a man," she evaded.

"What would you want?" Tell me!"

"Not now. Perhaps later!" she laughed coquettishly.

"This afternoon?" he urged.

"We'll see! I must leave you now," and with a nod and a smile, she disappeared within the revolving door of the big office building where the committee made their headquarters.

Doris finished her errand, then having some spare time, went to the library to consult some references for a paper she was to read before an economic club, took lunch at one of the department stores, then went to the studio building.

Koerner was watching for her, and his manner of greeting was a little too warm to please Doris, but she put him off with a flippant remark, and then proceeded to examine the various articles placed on tables and cabinets around the room. She was disappointed that Rabanath was not there, and determined to make her visit as brief as possible.

Koerner went about, calling her attention to the different objects.

She hastened the survey, and pleaded an engagement to get away as quickly as she could.

"Don't be in such a hurry," he said. "I promised Rab to keep you till he came back. I am expecting him every minute. Why should you be in such haste to leave?" he asked, coming close to her, and slipping an arm around her waist.

"Stop!" she exclaimed, flushing, although she was not much displeased.

She shook herself free so violently that she pushed him against a table that held a number of quaint Indian jars. One was hurled to the floor, and in striking was shattered to pieces. Instantly a strange pungent odor rose to her nostrils. She was seized with a feeling of giddiness, and rushed to the window, threw it wide open, and put her head out into the fresh air.

Gustave carefully picked up the fragments, and getting a cloth, wiped up the spilled liquid. He carefully held his breath as he worked.

"What is the matter? Don't you like Oriental perfume?" he asked when he had flung the cloth in a closet.

"It is overpowering," she answered. "I never did like strong perfumes, and I don't like your familiarity. I must be going now."

She left the window, and took up a little carved wooden figure.

"Don't get angry. I'll see if I can't get Rab on the phone," said Koerner politely. "He would be disappointed to miss you. You know how I care for you, Doris."

She heard him at the telephone, but did not pay any attention to what he was saying. She was examining the little wooden image that was curiously carved, and was idly speculating what it represented, when she observed that the upper part of the body was screwed into the carved flowing drapery that almost covered the pedestal. She turned the body, and found it unscrewed quite easily. As she removed the body she saw a small receptacle. Slipping a finger inside she found it contained a paper of the thinnest kind. As she brought it out to the light she saw what seemed to be a faintly-outlined map.

Spreading it out on a table, she was able to distinguish what seemed to picture a waterfront.

"What does this mean?" she muttered.

Her face went white. Was her father right, after all, in his suspicions of the New York Germans? Was this some secret message?

She slipped the paper into her glove, and went toward the door, intending to get away as quickly as possible, but to her consternation found it locked. Then she went

toward the one Gustave had just gone through to reach the telephone. He was still at that instrument, and she looked around to see how she could get out.

The apartment Koerner was in was a bedroom. There were two doors, one close to the telephone, which she could not reach without passing Koerner, and the other opened into the closet.

She retreated hastily, for she did not want Koerner to find her in his bedroom. At that moment he hung up the receiver, and came back.

"Rab will be here in two shakes of a lamb's tail," he said. Then noticing her extreme pallor, he added solicitously: "You still are faint from that perfume. Let me get you a glass of water. I wish I had something better to offer!"

When he brought it, she inadvertently raised her hand to take it from him. It was the hand covered by the glove into which she had thrust the paper, which was now plainly visible.

"What have you there?" cried Koerner, quickly snatching at the paper.

"Perhaps you can explain better than I," replied Doris, with apparent coolness, although she trembled in every limb.

He took the paper and studied it closely.

"How many more of these papers have you seen?" he demanded angrily.

"Isn't one sufficient?" she asked.

"More than enough!"

"I wish to go away at once," she said decidedly.

He made no reply, but seemed much disturbed and evidently did not know what to do. Just then the door was unlocked that opened into the hall, and Rabanath entered.

"In time?" he said gayly. Then seeing the strained looks of both, he asked: "What is the matter? Anything happened?"

"Yes, something very unfortunate." Koerner went close to the East Indian, spoke a few words, then they went into the adjoining room. Doris tried the door again, but could not open it. By this time she was thoroughly frightened.

The two young men now re-entered the room.

"I am sorry you should have seen that map. Will you promise never to speak of it, even to your own father and mother?" asked Koerner.

"I promise nothing. Let me out of here. Why did you ask me to come?"

"Before we can let you go, you must give us your binding promise never to allude to anything you may have seen here," insisted Koerner emphatically.

She shook her head.

"My dear Miss Cameron," said Rabanath in his slow, soft voice, "we intend harm to no one. This is a little private matter that would have a very severe consequence should it be prematurely divulged. All you have to do is to agree not to speak of it for a certain period. Will you promise?"

"No! And furthermore, if you do not open that door at once, and let me go, I will cry out to the passersby in the street!" As she spoke she advanced toward the open window. Koerner reached it first, and slammed it down. A quick word passed between the two men; then the girl became conscious of that strange pungent odor again. She found her breath going, her senses seemed unlocked. In vain she tried to cry out. Something was smothering her.

CHAPTER THREE

THE STRANGE DISAPPEARANCE OF DORIS CAMERON

GILBERT RICHARDSON was at his desk. He affixed his signature to a number of letters, pushed them off on one side, picked up a number of typewritten sheets, and carefully studied them. They were descriptions of suspected German aliens. He gave a few directions to his stenographer, then throwing himself back in his chair, gave a sigh of satisfaction. "I've got to watch those Germans, the chief demands it," he said to himself. "They are the ones who are committing all the sabotage in this country. I'll get after them soon.

"I've got things fixed now, so that I can get off a few hours and see the girl of my dreams before I buckle down to business."

He picked up the telephone receiver, and called the Cameron number, asking for Doris, but was told that the young lady had left early in the forenoon, and had not yet returned.

Richardson gave a grunt of disappointment. Then he went out to lunch.

Thinking to give Doris ample time to return, he was deliberate over his food, and even smoked a cigar before calling up the Cameron residence again.

But Doris was still absent. In reply to his inquiry, he was told that she had not taken her skates. The maid readily promised to have the young lady call up Richardson the minute she returned.

Gilbert spent the afternoon within reach of his phone. Every time it rang he lifted the receiver expectantly and hopefully to his ear, only to put it up again with a feeling of impatient disappointment. He had worked hard for this afternoon with Doris, and to be denied was almost wicked. If it wasn't for a dinner that evening at which he expected to meet several German suspects, he intended to take Doris to a show and finish the evening with a little supper. He shadowed the Germans that night, but failed to get any incriminating evidence against them.

It was late before he got to bed that night, and in some unaccountable way he overslept himself the following morning. When he got down to his office he found it heaped with work that had to be attended to. At noon he again tried to get Doris on the phone.

His disappointment was turned to consternation when he received the information that she had not returned. The family was nearly distracted. All the hospitals had been interviewed in the fear that she had met with an accident. Mr. Cameron at that moment was on his way to notify the police. They had waited till the last moment, in order to avoid publicity, hoping that the young lady had spent the night with one of her girl friends.

Gilbert felt a queer sensation at the pit of his stomach. He remembered having it before once when he had to go to the dentist with a sore tooth. There was no use trying to do any more work until he knew where Doris was. He hustled into his overcoat, dropped to the street in an elevator, ran down the subway steps, and was fortunate enough to catch an express, and was soon rushing uptown.

Mr. Cameron had just entered the house when Gilbert reached the door. He had not even removed his overcoat when the detective rang the bell. The older man opened the door himself, hoping that some word had come to him, and was much surprised to see the young man with whom he had but a slight acquaintance.

He was really glad to see some one who had known his daughter, and to find that he also was concerned in her unaccountable failure to return home the previous day.

He told Gilbert all any of them knew in regard to her movements. She had left the office of the committee soon after ten o'clock, and had then gone to Astor Library. Fortunately the maid had heard her tell some one that she was going there. She had left there about noon, and that was the last they heard concerning her.

"Who was it she was to meet?" asked Richardson feverishly.

"That we don't know. Naturally the maid only heard the conversation at this end of the phone; no names had been mentioned."

"Was there any one with her when she went into the library?"

"Not so far as any one knew. The librarian said she had asked for some books, had taken a seat in an alcove, and had not returned them when the librarian went out to luncheon; the books had been returned to the assistant."

"What do the police think?" asked Gilbert, after a short pause.

"Oh, they believe she has eloped. They say we'd better not make too much fuss, for she will be sure to return."

"But, in heaven's name, with whom could she elope?" almost shouted Richardson.

"Absolutely no one. Doris was a good child, a little heady at times, but she was no fool. We always knew where she was going. She was always prompt in returning when she said she would. That is what makes us so anxious. If she had been a different sort of a girl we should have more reason to hope that she has not met with foul play."

The bell rang again, and this time a ward detective in plain-clothes was admitted. A minute later Natalie followed him in.

"Have you heard from Doris yet?" she asked.

Mr. Cameron shook his head. He was tired of answering in the negative.

"Please give me a list of the names of her friends," began the ward-man.

"You will have to ask her mother," said Mr. Cameron wearily.

"Please request Mrs. Cameron to come in," directed the detective.

"She is prostrated, and is not able to sit up," replied her husband.

"Oh, I can give you the names of most of her friends, for we knew the same people!" interrupted Natalie.

Richardson was annoyed at the use of the past-tense that Natalie employed. Why should she refer to her as if she was of the past only?

She gave the names of several girl friends, when the detective asked:

"Did she have no male acquaintances?"

"Lots, in a way, but only a very few with whom she was at all intimate."

"Their names, please."

"Well, this gentleman here, Gilbert Richardson, a Mr. Gustave Koerner, Mr. ——."

Mr. Cameron did not permit her to finish.

"That German fellow was no friend of my daughter's. I positively forbade her to have anything to do with him."

This statement aroused the detective at once.

"A German, eh? When did she see him last?" he demanded of Natalie.

"I'm sure I don't know. The last time I saw him was a day or two ago when we were skating on Van Cortlandt Park Lake."

"Who has this young man's address?" persisted the ward detective.

"Oh, I have it, all right. He and his friend, Mr. Rabanath, a Hindoo student, live together in a studio building near Gramercy Park."

"I'll hunt him up," remarked the detective, slipping his note-book into his pocket after a few more questions, and taking up his hat, he took his departure.

Mr. Cameron was angry at Natalie's interference.

"That will confirm their notion that she has gone off with a man!" he exclaimed.

"I must be going," said Richardson rising. He felt they were losing time, and yet he had not the slightest idea what to do. All his detective instincts were aroused, however, and he resolved to find her at any cost.

"So must I," echoed Natalie. "I am going your way."

He wondered how she knew what way he was going, but did not give expression to his thought. As they went down the stoop together, Natalie said, with a little laugh:

"Old man Cameron has been come up with for once!"

"What do you mean?" His manner was almost sharp.

"Oh, he's always nagging Doris about her young men friends, not allowing her to receive their calls at the house, and keeping such a strict watch on her that she never had a chance to have a good time. I really never believed she had it in her to get from under him."

"Then you think——" he paused suggestively.

"Yes, I do. I think she went somewhere with Koerner, that the time passed quicker than she thought, and she was afraid to come home."

"But where could she be now?"

"Search me!" She shrugged her shoulders, then added, with a sly little laugh: "Perhaps I should say, search Koerner."

"Do you believe she has gone off with him, and married him?"

"Yes. I think just that. He was in love with her, and Doris, I'm certain, liked him pretty well. I don't suppose she had any idea of getting married when she left yesterday morning."

"But if they were married, the license bureau would show that. I'll go down at once," and without waiting to excuse himself he strode off.

"H-u-m, rather abrupt in your movements, aren't you?" muttered Natalie, as she looked after his disappearing form.

Richardson soon assured himself that no marriage license for Koerner and Doris had been issued.

He next looked up Koerner's address, and went to the studio building, where he asked for the superintendent. That functionary was very affable, but gave no information save that the studio was locked, that both young men seemed to be away, and that they often were away for days at a time. They conducted themselves with propriety, he said, and bore most excellent characters. He did not know whether either had any relatives, nor who their friends were. They paid their rent regularly, observed the rules of the building, and that was as much as he could require of them. They were not accountable to him for their goings and comings.

Discouraged, Richardson went back to his office. He was finishing a case for his agency, but his thoughts were not with his work. He could not believe that Doris had gone off voluntarily with another man, for she had shown that she was vitally interested in him.

He wondered if Natalie did not know more about

Doris' disappearance than she admitted, and called her up. He asked her to go to a show that night, in order to pump her.

When Natalie received the invitation over the telephone, she drew in a sharp little breath of delight.

As she hung up the receiver, she murmured:

"With Doris out of the way, I believe I can make a running with Gilbert Richardson. He certainly is worth while."

She took more than usual pains with her appearance that night, selecting her most alluring gown. If Natalie Fairbanks was not beautiful, she had the gift of lure, which is often more effective than mere physical comeliness.

As Richardson regarded her critically across the little table, after the show, he marveled that he should have always considered her plain. It was not long before she recalled to him the afternoon she had spent with Doris, Rabanath and Koerner, of the strange explosion, and of the young German's disappearance before any one had a chance to question or investigate.

That incident set Richardson's brain to working. How he passed the remainder of the evening he scarcely knew. He remembered dancing several times, all the while eager to get off alone to think. Here at least was a clue.

At home he paced the floor, or lay in bed with wide-open eyes, trying to see his way out. Before retiring, he had hunted down every clue he could find that might lead to her recovery, but it had been useless. He scarcely waited till daylight before rising and dressing, for he wanted to find Koerner, and question him. Taking a hurried breakfast, he caught a train, and by what seemed to be phenomenal good luck found, on arriving at the munitions plant, that a man by the name of Koerner, while not connected with the factory, had a laboratory not far away.

It afterward proved that he was one of the suspected aliens the officer had been watching.

The elder Koerner was only a short distance from the station, and Richardson knew where to find him. Koerner was already in his laboratory, and showed no surprise when a stranger made inquiries concerning his son.

"He has just left," said the elder man, peering out of the dust-covered window-pane with his spectacled eyes. "There he is, just turning the corner."

Richardson scarcely waited to express his thanks, but rushed after the quickly-disappearing form. He had sufficient time to see that he carried a suit-case, and thought he would have no trouble in overtaking him. But he missed him. Then he went to the station to await, surmising that he would take an early train back to the city. A New York train had just pulled out, and a porter told him that several men with suit-cases had gotten aboard.

Richardson was disappointed, but concluded to go back to the elder Koerner's place and make more minute inquiries. But just as he reached the door there was a thunderous report, and then another, and another. In fact, it seemed as if a bombardment were taking place. Things were flying around in the air. Richardson did not know which way to dodge. Next there was an upheaval of the ground, he was thrown violently, and a shower of timbers, bricks, and a cloud of dust flew up. A few seconds later only a huddled mass of ruins lay where the laboratory had been standing.

Farther away shells were detonating, showers of debris falling, clouds of dust rising; shouting and screaming added to the confusion of sound, while women and children were rushing in all directions.

CHAPTER FOUR

AN ANONYMOUS COMMUNICATION

RICHARDSON revived in a hospital, although not seriously hurt, but it was some days before he could return to his office. In the meantime an investigation had been set a-foot, to inquire into the causes of the explosion. The elder Koerner had been killed instantly. As soon as Richardson was able to call up Mr. Cameron, he inquired whether anything had been learned about Doris, and was told, "Absolutely nothing!" The delay rendered the detective frantic. Advertisements had been put in the newspapers in the hope that Doris would reply.

For all that Koerner was born in this country, Mr. Cameron said he believed him to be a German at heart. As for Doris having gone off with him, he thought the idea preposterous.

Richardson was disappointed at the complete absence of clues, still he felt a little comforted in the father's conviction that Doris had not eloped with Koerner.

On examining the mail that had accumulated during his illness, the officer found a brief note that bothered him not a little. It was neither dated nor signed, bore no address, was typewritten on plain paper, and had been dropped into one of the receiving-boxes of the General Post-office. It was worded as follows:

"Search the coal bunkers of the *Assyrian* for bombs."

A newspaper item accompanying it said the steamship *Assyrian* was to carry a large sum of gold across the ocean. Why had he been notified of the conspiracy instead of the government? He showed the note to his chief, who was not inclined to place any confidence in the warning.

"I take no stock in anonymous communications," he said sourly. "If there is anything in it, the person ought to make the assertion over his own signature. Besides the ship has probably coaled, for she sails to-day."

"But couldn't she be detained?" urged Richardson, who, for some undefined reason, believed in the genuineness of the warning.

"You might go down to the Custom House and see what they say."

Richardson hailed a taxi and had himself whirled to the office of the Collector of the Port, whom he fortunately found at his desk. When shown the note, he called his secretary and told him to make inquiries as to whether such a warning had been received by the department.

This took some little time, while Richardson inwardly fumed. It seemed to him as if valuable time was being lost. No information could be obtained that showed the department had been taken into the confidence of the unknown correspondent. The vessel had now left her dock, he learned.

"She could be warned by wireless," suggested Richardson.

"Yes, that might be done, and shall be attended to immediately," said the collector.

On examining the envelope containing the anonymous note, Richardson found it had been mailed the day following the explosion, and had lain unopened with his private mail. He could not rid himself of the uneasy feeling that a catastrophe was about to happen, and his fears were realized when a week later it was reported that the *Assyrian* had either been torpedoed or had struck a submerged mine. A few survivors were picked up in open boats, but there was nothing left of the vessel. The treasure probably lay at the bottom of the ocean.

At the close of the afternoon a week later, Richardson sat alone in his deserted office.

The telephone jingled, and he took the receiver listlessly, too despondent even to be annoyed, and recognized Natalie's voice.

"Hello," he called. "What am I going to do to-night? I was just wondering. What! News from Doris? Gee! what is it? Where can I see you? I must see you at once. I'll meet you at Forty-second street subway. Don't keep me waiting a minute longer than you can help. Tell me one thing, is it bad news? Good? Thank God!"

News from Doris, and good news! What a difference that made in everything! He disposed of the few papers that lay on his table, switched off his desk-light, slipped into his overcoat, and went racing down the corridor.

Natalie was at the subway exit almost as soon as he. As he caught sight of her radiant face his heart became still lighter.

They greeted each other hastily, and then Richardson led her to ne of the many lobster palaces whose lights are a part of the Great White Way. Curbing his impatience, she refused to speak until they had privacy. The waiter recognized the detective, and led them to one of the reserved tables. Richardson ordered champagne with their meal.

"We must celebrate!" he declared joyously.

Natalie nodded, waited until her glass was filled, then raising it, she looked across the table to Richardson, and said:

"We will drink to the health of the groom and bride!"

"What do you mean?" He set his glass down, forgetting to put it to his lips.

"Doris and Koerner are married!"

"Impossible!"

"They took out a license a week or so after her disappearance."

"Not in New York, for I have had a strict watch kept!"

"No; Chicago. A marriage license for Gustave Koerner and Doris Cameron was advertised. The records were gone over, and the entry found by a friend of mine."

Gilbert drained his glass, and refilled it.

Doris married! He could not believe it. Yet but an hour before he had told himself he would be satisfied to know she was safe and happy even without him!

He glanced across the table and saw Natalie regarding him with an inscrutable smile. She had scarcely tasted her champagne. He would have to drink for her.

"We must pledge the happy pair!" he declared, with a ghastly smile, and once more he emptied his glass. He felt that he needed stimulants, for the shock had completely unnerved him.

Dinner was placed before them, and Richardson tried to eat, but the food choked him.

He took another glass of champagne—the tenth—although he was not accustomed to drinking. All his natural caution was gone now, and a fit of reckless abandon took its place. There was nothing like champagne to put life into one's veins, he reflected. The music was fine. He rose unsteadily to his feet presently. The room seemed dancing, as well as the tables and people. But that was all right. The last time he held Doris in his arms was when she had been almost knocked down by those silly people who didn't look where they were going.

Then he was conscious of a pair of clinging arms, a subtle fragrance, some half-spoken words that he could not seem to control. He believed that the champagne had gone to his head. He could dance all right. It must be the heat. He thought vaguely that he'd better get out of there before he made a fool of himself.

How he managed to get Natalie and himself into the street and into the fresh air he never knew. He hailed a taxi, expecting to take Natalie home. But he wasn't quite sure that she didn't take him home. The night-porter helped him to his apartment. He wondered who helped Natalie.

It was the morning after with all its concomitants before Richardson came to himself enough to conjecture what he had done the previous evening. A cold bath and a bromide seltzer helped a little, and he managed to get down to his office not more than two hours late. His private mail lay separate, his stenographer had put the official correspondence on one side. Thoughts of the missing Doris came into his mind. He buried his face in his hands and groaned, but was called to himself by the appearance of his stenographer.

"Did you call, Mr. Richardson?"

Replying in the negative, he picked up a letter, the handwriting of which had attracted his attention, and glanced to the bottom of the page for the signature, "Natalie." Then he read:

"DARLING SWEETHEART: I can't sleep till I tell you how happy you made me last night! And I was only just beginning to suspect your love for me. I wonder if you really love me as I do you. I simply adore you!

"NATALIE."

His heart seemed to stand still. So this is what he had done the previous night—made love to a girl for whom he cared absolutely nothing. But it didn't matter though, now that Doris was married. He supposed it might as well be Natalie as any other girl. He wondered if he could make one girl as happy as another had made him unhappy. He picked up another letter and opened it, and its contents startled him.

CHAPTER FIVE

A MYSTERIOUS WARNING

THE note was longer than the one the detective had received previously, but was evidently from the same source. It read:

"Look into activities in Mexico by Germans against the United States. Plot in India to subvert British, financed by German government. Funds sent to Von Bernstein at German Embassy at Washington to bribe a halt in all measures considered inimical to German interests."

Why did not this unknown informant approach the Secret Service Department? It was evidently some one who knew what was going on among the German spies, and it was very mysterious, to say the least.

He sought his chief, laid the message before him, and he read it with careful attention.

"I don't altogether like it," he commented slowly. "The government knows about pro-German activities across the Mexican border, and suspects their endeavors to alienate the South American republics from us, in order to do away with the Monroe Doctrine. The affair in India is for the British government to tackle, but we were unprepared for any attempt to suborn our national legislators. I am sure they will not succeed. Go to Washington at once and find out all you can. Draw on me for your expense account. I trust entirely to your discretion."

"Thank you," replied Richardson. "That is just where

I wanted to go. I wish I could find out who is writing to me, and why I should be singled out."

"I was wondering about that also. Have you no American friends married to Germans?"

Richardson was about to disclaim all such acquaintance when he thought of Doris, and hesitated.

His chief was regarding him inquiringly.

"Only one. You remember the disappearance of Miss Cameron?"

"Oh, yes; and the police were right after all, in their opinion that she had eloped, as the marriage license was found recorded."

"How did you know?" asked Gilbert in surprise.

"Read it in this morning's papers. Haven't you seen them?"

"No; I got down late, and this letter put every other thought out of my mind. I knew Miss Cameron, and have suspected Koerner of being a spy." He told how he had seen Koerner, after leaving his father's laboratory. "But if Miss Cameron thought enough of him to run away with him why should she now try to set spies on his track?"

"Women are queer creatures," was the sage reply. "Follow this thing up, Gil, and keep me informed, as I am intensely interested."

Richardson was ready to leave on the noon train for Washington. He barely thought of Natalie, but when he did it was with exceeding distaste. What a fool a usually sensible man was capable of making of himself at times. He took up his desk-phone and called her up.

As soon as she recognized his voice she gave a little gurgle of delight.

"I am called to Washington on important business, and cannot see you before I go," he said crisply, "although I wanted to discuss your surprising letter."

"How long are you to be away?" she asked.

"Can't say. Sealed orders, so to say."

"Be sure and write me; or better still, call me up on the long-distance. Promise!"

"All right!" and he set down the instrument before she had time to make further demands.

All the way to the national capital, Richardson's thoughts were revolving around that one question: who was his unknown correspondent? The chief had given him a number of introductions to prominent persons who might be able to help him, and he planned to mingle in political circles, and keep his eyes and ears open.

On his arrival he dressed and dined, and then considered how he should spend the rest of the evening. The theater was about all that offered. A dress-circle seat was secured, by applying to the clerk of the hotel at which he was stopping. He always made it a rule to cultivate the acquaintance of hotel clerks, for they were in a position to give information on many subjects.

His seat commanded a good view of the house. When the lights were turned on, he directed his glass toward the boxes that were filled with more or less beautiful women, all richly gowned, with their male companions.

In one of the boxes two men sat in front, while a lady with them sat well back. She seemed desirous of escaping observation. Just because she did not seem to care to be seen, Gilbert Richardson decided that she was the one woman he wished to see. He kept his glass directed on her, but her face was averted. She was young, he could see that from her slender curves, and the head was well set on her shoulders. His gaze rested on the faces of the two men, and he gave a start. The men were Rabanath and Koerner! Could the woman be Doris?

Before he had time to leave his seat, the lights went down, the curtain rose, and when the act was over and the lights flared up again that particular box was empty. Richardson lost no time in getting back to his hotel.

There he resorted to his friend, the clerk.

He could recall no Koerner, and as for the East Indian, there were numbers of them in constant circulation, and it was no unusual combination, that of a German and a Hindu. If he were in any way connected with the German Embassy, as Richardson suggested he might be, he would call up the Embassy and make inquiries. The answer came to the phone in a very German accent, asking who wanted Koerner.

"What Koerner are you?" asked Richardson.

"Ask for Wilhelm Koerner, janitor," came over the wire.

Gilbert laughed.

"That's evidently not my man. I'll get some one to introduce me at the Embassy to-morrow, and then perhaps I can do better."

Next morning while waiting to hear from his introductions, Richardson went out to the Treasury Department and gave his anonymous letter to the chief of the Secret Service. Then he returned to the street. Not only was it during the legislative sessions, but the city was full of foreign visitors, and strangers who had come on personal or public business.

He was standing in front of one of the large stores on Pennsylvania avenue, before which was a line of automobiles, when a lady came out and walked to the curb where a handsome car awaited. Something in her walk seemed familiar. He sprang forward to catch a glimpse of her face. The chauffeur was already closing the door. Richardson dashed away his hand, for he had recognized the girl.

"Doris!" he called, stepping up on to the running-board.

The lady turned surprised and unrecognizing eyes in his direction.

"I beg your pardon," she said. "You have made some mistake."

"Doris, don't you know me?" he persisted in astonishment.

"You have mistaken me for some one else. Please step off," she said with dignity.

Astounded, he got off the running-board, his eyes still fixed on the young lady's face.

"Is not that Mrs. Koerner?" he asked of the chauffeur.

"No, it is not," snapped the chauffeur. "You see the lady doesn't know you. Now you get out of here. You can't force yourself into that car while I am around."

The man had started the car, and was in the middle of the avenue before the words had left his lips. He sped off fast, and he ran after it, but was soon left hopelessly in the rear. Then it vanished around a corner.

Richardson was sure the young woman was Doris. He could not be deceived in the identity of the girl he had loved; yes, and loved still as fervently as ever. How baffling to see her twice, and be as far from her as before. He would not give up until he had gotten at the bottom of this mystery. Unfortunately, he had not noticed the license-number of the car. Had he done so he could have traced the owner.

When he returned to the hotel for luncheon, he found several invitations awaiting him. His letters of introduction were beginning to show results. One was for a reception that same evening, and with it came a card saying that the sender would be glad to become acquainted with him, and hoped he would make himself known that day. Another came from an official, who said he would be at liberty for a few moments that afternoon, and would be

glad to be of service to the representative of his old friend, Gilbert's chief.

Both of the invitations Richardson received were from men high in official circles, and they could be of material assistance to him in the business that had brought him to Washington.

To the official he met that afternoon he gave his unlimited confidence, so far as it concerned the suspected Germans. He also told him of the disappearance of the young girl, her marriage to Koerner, whom he was trying to meet, and of her failure to recognize him.

"It might be a case of mistaken identity," suggested the official.

"Impossible! She was my sweetheart," was Richardson's positive denial.

"I shall have this Koerner hunted down and found. Give me your New York address. If I get him located, I'll phone you."

"As I know he is now in Washington, I ought to be able to trace him myself, if I could get some aid."

"No doubt of it, and I'll do all I can to facilitate the job."

The detective then went to the reception and made himself known to his host and hostess. After a few introductions, he withdrew to one side and watched the incoming guests. The evening was well over when he received a shock of surprise. On the other side of the drawing-room he saw two men, whom he recognized as Koerner and Rabanath, but could not see Doris.

The detective made his way over to where the two young men were standing, but neither gave any sign of recognition as he accosted them. Both were courteous, and the East Indian responded to the name of Rabanath, but both disclaimed that of Koerner, as well as ever having met Richardson before.

"Perhaps you will be kind enough to tell me your friend's name," asked Richardson of Rabanath.

"Certainly. Mr. Arthur Kennard. And yours?" he inquired in turn.

Gilbert told him, and asked:

"And Mrs. Kennard, is she here? Am I to have the pleasure of meeting her."

"I beg your pardon!" interrupted the so-called Kennard. "Why should you desire to meet my wife, and what reason have I to believe my wife would like to meet you?"

"Simply because I did not know but that she is an old friend of mine," ventured the detective, studying them to probe their motive.

"You must pardon me, but I do not care for my wife to meet unknown persons."

"Will the introduction of our host be sufficient to establish my respectability?"

"If he knows you. The fact of your being here does not prove that you are even an acquaintance of the host."

"As I have been standing by the receiving-party all the evening, and have not seen either you or your friend pay your respects, perhaps you are ready now, and I will ask that we be properly introduced."

The two men stepped forward, as if about to accompany Richardson, then paused.

"We arrived so late that we thought we would not present ourselves. See, the receiving-party is dispersing." Both men bowed, and showed plainly they had no further desire for his company.

Richardson was determined not to be balked again. Seeing his host, he reached him quickly, and indicating the two young men, asked:

"Are you acquainted with those men?"

"I don't recognize them," was the answer. But you see I meet so many people, and am a little short-sighted, that I can't always say whom I do know and whom I don't. They may be friends of my wife."

"At least, I have learned one fact," thought Richardson; "he calls himself Kennard here in Washington. Now I may be able to find out what sort of a game those two young fellows are framing up, for they lied infamously when Koerner denied his identity."

CHAPTER SIX

RICHARDSON MEETS SOME OLD ACQUAINTANCES

RICHARDSON reported by phone to the official who had promised to have Koerner's pedigree hunted up that it was possible that he passed under the name of Kennard.

"Kennard? Oh, yes. He is quite a well-known character her. He entertains lavishly. Has a beautiful wife. I'll get you a card to one of their 'at homes.' But be careful, for rumor has it that their friendly games of chance run to pretty high stakes."

Gambling! That, then, was what the German was doing in secret.

"Thank you for the warning. I should be glad to get into their house. At least I can convince myself as to the identity of my old friend," said the detective.

The invitation came in the afternoon, and was for that same evening. Evidently Koerner was not in seclusion, nor keeping his wife out of the limelight. It was with impatience that Gilbert waited for an hour, when he could present himself at the address on his card of invitation.

He found it to be a handsome residence of pretentious style, and seemed to be the residence of a man of wealth. The rooms were not crowded, and the men were greatly in the majority, although there were some women in evening gowns that seemed to savor of the small-town *modiste* or were of the department-store, ready-to-wear variety. Richardson was a little puzzled, until he heard one and another of the guests addressed. Then a light dawned upon him. He had jumped right into the middle of what he had been after! They were politicians.

He had not greeted his host and hostess as yet, in fact he had not seen any lady who he thought might be Mrs. Kennard. But presently, from one of the spacious apartments at the back of the house, advanced a slender form in evening-dress, flashing with jewels, and fairly radiating light and loveliness. The operative was positive she was Doris.

The official who had brought Richardson led him up to the hostess and presented him. She received him graciously, but as a stranger, and talked with his sponsor in a friendly way, with an occasional fleeting smile and the gleam in her beautiful eyes that Gilbert always loved. But when she was silently listening to the conversation of her guests a veil seemed to fall over her features, like a pall of unutterable weariness.

The crowd in the room was perceptibly thinning at ten, although the guests were not leaving, but seemed to be moving to another room. Mrs. Kennard made no move to lead the way for Gilbert; instead, she offered to take him into her little conservatory and show him a rare orchid that had been sent her that day.

His heart leaped to his throat. Was she going at last to throw aside this veil of reserve, and reveal her

true self? He waited until they were alone, and then called softly, "Doris!"

She started, put out a hand, and then drew away from him with a pitiful little gesture, scarcely breathing, "Don't!"

"But, Doris, dear, tell me that you know me. Tell me what has happened to you since you went away!"

She put her hand to her head with a weary gesture, murmuring:

"I can't talk of it."

"Why not? Don't you remember?"

She seemed about to speak. There was a noise in the drawing-room. She shivered, then shook her head sadly.

"Don't you remember me, Doris?" There was infinite pleading in his tones and eyes.

"Don't," she whispered. "You hurt me!"

"Looks like a case of lost memory—aphasia," he muttered.

He sighed, but said no more. In fact, he had no chance, for a call came for Mrs. Kennard, and Rabanath advanced toward them. He saluted Gilbert politely, then said gently to the girl:

"You are needed, dear madam."

She bowed slightly to Gilbert, as if disarming him, and resting her hand lightly on Rabanath's arm, permitted him to lead her into the adjoining room.

Gilbert did not leave; instead, he found his way into the card-room, where men and women were playing. Koerner, or Kennard as he now called himself, did not play, but walked about amid his guests. After a while the officer observed that some men were winning largely, and he quietly made inquiries as to their names, which he determined to remember until he could record them in his notebook.

The situation was most baffling, yet he was comforted not a little at the thought that he was near Doris, and possibly, sooner or later, might be of service to her. If she was held against her will, he would try to get her away from those men. Her mental condition was such, he was sure, that it could be ameliorated under proper treatment. There seemed no doubt that she was legally married to Koerner, consequently he had no legal right to interfere with her, unless he learned that she was held by an illegal influence.

He did not see her again that evening, but in the morning sent her some violets—her favorite flower—with a little note asking her to ring him up and tell him when he might call.

The message came soon after noon, saying that Mrs. Kennard would be at home that afternoon at four o'clock. The voice was that of a young woman, probably of a maid who had been given the message to deliver.

Richardson was prompt. The hour was striking as he stood waiting for the door to be opened to admit him to Doris' presence. His pulses were tingling at the thought of being with her again, and he hoped she would receive him alone.

He was shown into a little room on one side of the hall. It was an intimate little room, with easy chairs, tables, books and flowers, and gave evidence of being occupied by a woman who loved dainty things. He was standing with his back to the door, looking out of the window, when he heard a silent sound behind him. He turned quickly, thinking Doris had entered. But no one was there. His eye fell on a small vial on the floor, and he stooped to pick it up. Probably it had fallen, but the soft rug had prevented it from being broken. It was of antique design and make, and as he was examining the curiously wrought figures that ornamented it, he noticed a strong fragrance. He put the little jar to his nose and inhaled deeply. The perfume was very agreeable, but very powerful, for he was conscious of a slight dizziness that did not pass; instead, it seemed to increase. He went to the window and tried to open it, but it was securely fastened. A feeling of nausea seized him, and his one thought was to get to the street, but he could not even reach the room door, for his legs gave way beneath him, lights began flaring, which was succeeded by a metallic din, then blackness, and he knew no more until he awoke in a strange room.

A light came in over the transom from the corridor. He found an electric bulb, switched on the light, and looked about. Everything was new to him like a bedchamber of a hotel, but not the one he had occupied the few nights he had been in Washington. Then he looked at his watch, and found it was after midnight. He felt drowsy, laid down and went to sleep.

It was morning when he opened his eyes again, and he arose and dressed himself. He had his money and his watch, his clothes were in good shape, but he could recall nothing since inhaling that peculiar perfume.

Next he went downstairs, and found he was in a hotel. A cup of coffee made him feel better; then he sought the clerk at the desk and asked where he was, and how he got there.

"You are in the Auditorium, in Chicago," was the astounding reply. "You were brought in by two gentlemen of most excellent manners and appearance, who said that you had been celebrating your arrival in town too well, if not wisely, leaving orders that you were not to be disturbed. They also left an envelope for you, which I will deliver if you will kindly sign this receipt."

Richardson signed, and took the envelope, which he did not open in the clerk's presence. When alone, he took a bulky sheet of paper from it. There were a couple of lines of writing in a hand entirely unfamiliar to him:

"Keep out of our business. Next time you won't get off so easily!"

The date was three days old, the period that Richardson had been lost to the world.

So the appointment had simply been a ruse to get him out of the way! Well, it should not succeeed, for he'd take the first train back to Washington. He called up Washington, and his official friend, to whom he told the story as briefly as possible.

"Come at once," was the reply. "I think we have sufficient evidence to justify a raid on that gambler's house."

The idea of a raid was repugnant to Richardson, on account of Doris, but he would see what could be done to protect her. He did not dare send her warning, for he did not know into whose hands the warning might fall, besides, it would give the German and East Indian time to cover their tracks.

While on his way to Washington, it occurred to him that he had not called Natalie up on the long-distance phone since his departure from New York! Hardly the oversight of a devoted lover!

He wrote on the train a friendly, chatty letter, telling how he had met Koerner and Rabanath, but making no mention of having seen Doris, or of their change of name, nor of his suspicions that Koerner was plotting in the interests of Germany.

On his arrival in Washington, he communicated at once with his official sponsor, and was asked to come to him quickly. There he was told of the plans to raid Koerner's place that night, after the departure of the guests, for no

one wished to have any one of prominence mixed up in an affair of that kind. It was arranged that the official should attend the reception that evening, so as to give the tip when the raid was to be made, as it would hardly do for Richardson to present himself at the house where he had received such inhospitable treatment. The detective, however, decided that he should not be far away. He remembered a long window that opened into the garden from the little conservatory, and took up his station just outside, well out of view of passersby. There were friendly shadows to conceal his presence. He had the taxi that brought him to the house waiting on the side-street. It might be possible to get Doris away in the confusion of the raid, so he could question her in private.

The guests came, as he could see from his position at the window, but the little conservatory remained empty and dark. It was a French window, and he tried it to find out if it were fastened. It was not, and he quietly slipped inside, and hid behind some tall palms, but in a position that gave him a view of the drawing-room. He saw his friend talking and the laughing gleam in those lovely eyes.

Then suddenly the sound of talking ceased, there was a moving of chairs, sounds of them being overturned, a few low uttered directions, and the room seemed to be in the possession of the police.

Not a guest was molested, but all were required to give names and addresses before being allowed to leave—women as well as men. That none gave the proper ones, did not deter the police from demanding such as were given.

Suddenly two men in evening-dress rushed through the door leading from the drawing-room, passed so close to Richardson that he could have seized their coat-tails had he so desired, and leaped out of the window that he had left ajar.

Instantly he was in the other room, where he saw Doris huddled in a corner, with white face and frightened eyes.

"Come here, quick!" he breathed.

She gave a start as she heard his voice, a light came to her eyes. His presence seemed to bring relief.

"Oh, can't you get me out?" she cried softly.

"Sure! Where can I get something to throw over you?" Her shoulders and throat were bare, and she wore a thin chiffon gown.

"Tear down one of the portières," she directed.

It was but a minute before she found herself enveloped in a heavy brocade curtain. Richardson took her by the arm and quickly led her through the conservatory, out into the garden, through a little side-gate to the waiting taxi. The police guard knew him, and offered no objection.

They did not speak during the short ride to his hotel. He was wondering how he could account for her appearance with a portière draping her diaphanous gown and slender body. But she had arranged for that, for with a twist, and a jeweled pin or two, she had contrived to turn the portière into the appearance of an evening wrap, and she emerged from the taxi, entering the hotel on his arm with the air of one who had just returned from the theater, and was ready for a midnight supper.

He made no explanation to the night-clerk, simply asked that a room be assigned his sister, Mrs. Cameron. The clerk did as was requested, but there was a little quirk in one corner of his mouth, for which the detective felt like punching him.

Doris went to her room long before Gilbert sought his. His heart was in a tumult. Now that he had got her away from those two men perhaps he could bring her memory back. That she was victim of some form of aphasia he was sure.

At length he sought his room. He did not sleep at once, and he was late in waking next day. His first thought was that the same roof covered Doris and himself. He wondered if she would have breakfast with him. Then he laughed at himself, for he remembered her evening gown, and portière wrap.

"We'll have to supplement her wardrobe at once," he thought, as he went down to breakfast.

After he had eaten, the night-clerk met him, and whispered knowingly:

"Lady has been inquiring for you. Not the one you had last night. I guess this one is the real missus. I told her you weren't up yet."

"What are you driving at?" demanded Richardson in astonishment.

"Oh, when you young fellows get away from home, I know you want to take your fling. But say, the little missus is not to be sneezed at. You'll find her in the ladies' room. She said she wouldn't register until after she had seen you."

The officer went to the ladies' reception-room, and saw ensconced in a big chair the lithe form of Natalie Fairbanks.

"Hello, dear!" she cried. "I found I could come to Washington, and thought it would be just lovely to be here at the same time with you. I got your letter, and quite forgive you for not calling me up. What adventures you have been having!"

CHAPTER SEVEN

RICHARDSON HAS AN UNEXPECTED VISITOR

"ARE you alone?" asked Richardson, wondering what he was going to do with the girl.

"Yes. I rode on the night-train, had breakfast, and then came to the hotel so as to see you before you went out. What late hours you must keep, not to be down to breakfast till after nine o'clock."

"I was busy last night, and didn't get to bed till the wee sma' hours. Where were you thinking of staying?"

"Oh, you silly boy, you needn't worry your head about me. I have a boarding-place engaged where they take in unattached females. It will be lovely to be in the Capital with you, for you can show me around."

"I am afraid I won't have much time," he began, when she interrupted him.

"I shan't interfere with your official duties, but will accept any scraps of your time you may be pleased to bestow."

"You are very considerate," he answered, wondering how he was going to get her away before Doris should appear. Perhaps it would be better to enlist Natalie's services in behalf of her friend. A woman could supply the necessary accessories to a woman's morning toilet, of which Doris was temporarily deprived. He might better consult Doris herself first.

"If you will wait a few moments till I can send a few messages and get my coat and hat, I will go with you to the hotel where you have arranged to remain while in Washington."

"All right, I'll wait."

He went to the desk and asked the clerk to call up Mrs. Cameron and say that her brother was waiting to speak to her.

The clerk did as requested, so far as calling to the

room, but informed Richardson that he could get no answer.

"Send a maid to her," directed the detective.

In a few moments a maid appeared with the information that the lady not having responded to her knock, she had opened the door, which was unlocked, and found it unoccupied. The bed had not been touched.

"Did she leave no word for me?" asked Richardson, scarcely able to believe what he heard.

"No," said the clerk.

How could she have left the hotel during the night or early morning without attracting any notice in her unusual attire? She must have telephoned to some one to come for her.

Richardson got his coat and hat, and went back to Natalie, glad that he had said nothing about Doris. He did not care to hear her comments on the girl's singular behavior.

He took her to her boarding-place, arranged to take her out to dinner, and the theater afterward, and then left her, for he was anxious to know what the police had done the preceding night at Koerner's.

Then he went to the office of the Secret Service, and was at once admitted. There he was told that all the principals had escaped, but that not having time to open the safe before escaping, the police had found a number of important papers, beside the I O U's of a number of prominent men from the States believed to be pro-German.

Richardson said nothing about his part in running away with one of the principals, as he supposed Doris would be so regarded.

When Natalie dressed for her evening with Richardson, she hesitated long when selecting her costume. She had but one handsome evening gown, and had brought it with her, hoping to have occasion to wear it, and she could not decide whether this was to be the occasion or not. Finally, however, she decided on a *chic* afternoon dress that would not make her conspicuous at either dinner or the theater. When Richardson told her of an invitation to the German Embassy reception, she congratulated herself on showing foresight.

The detective did not act like a lover, and the girl did not exact any exuberant display of affection. Sometimes she offered him a caress, which he could not very well ignore, and she always offered her lips to him at meeting and parting, when alone.

As the days passed, Richardson scoured the city for Doris, but failed to find her. He grew very much concerned at being made a captive by Natalie, despite his mute protest. He was annoyed that she should have followed him to Washington, and wondered if he was to have her always dogging his steps. She was so pleasant that he could not treat her harshly, although he had the uncomfortable feeling that she had framed him into an engagement while he was under the influence of champagne. But he had his mind made up never to marry her.

Several days passed, and as there was little to do except to circulate among people who might be concerned in the attempt to influence public opinion in favor of Germany, he had plenty of opportunity to take Natalie about, so that she felt her visit to the national capital was to turn out a great success. If she resented his coldness, she gave no hint of it in his presence, but Natalie Fairbanks was not one to wear her heart on her sleeve for daws to peck at.

Gilbert himself was in a state of great unrest. He felt he was accomplishing little in Washington, that the Secret Service men would do what he was trying to do in a much more expeditious and thorough manner. Still, he did not like to return to New York without accomplishing anything at all.

While he was thinking seriously of returning to New York, he found in his mail another unsigned typewritten letter. This one was more definite and longer than either of the other two. The fact that it came to Washington showed that the anonymous writer was watching him. It read:

"There are movements in the West to ferment dissatisfaction with the conduct of the national government. These peace parties are financed by German sympathizers, and led by a German and Hindu. The International Free Laborers is the name of the gang they are organizing. Plots are being framed by them to injure growing crops, to burn granaries, wreck cars, and explode storehouses. Get the Secret Service officials to investigate them. It is no one man's job. People must awaken to the fact that Germany is working hard here to keep us from interfering with her projects, and to preclude all possibility of the United States joining the Entente Allies against her."

The letter had been dropped in the general postoffice of a Western city where there was a large German population.

"A German and a Hindu!" he muttered significantly.

He showed the letter to the chief of the Secret Service, who seemed to be impressed by its contents. He favored Richardson's plan to depart at once for the city the note came from, and told him that he would be put into communication with the Secret Service wherever he found it expedient to go.

Richardson found, on consulting a time-table, that he had barely time to pack his trunk and get an express for St. Louis. He did not attempt to see Natalie or even call her up. But he wrote her a brief note, telling her that he had been called away very unexpectedly, that he did not know when he would return East, thanked her for the pleasant hours they had spent together, and promised to write when he reached the end of his journey.

If Richardson could have seen Natalie's face while she was reading his note, the tightening of the lips, the cold glint in the veiled eyes, the vicious manner in which she tore his letter to shreds, he might have doubted the depth of her affection.

"Fool!" she muttered. "Do you think you can get away from me! It suits me to marry you, for you are a rising man, and I, too, have ambitions. This week in Washington has made me all the more determined to secure a place as your wife." She gave a vindictive little laugh.

That same day she went home, and waited for his next communication with what patience she could command.

Meanwhile Detective Richardson was speeding westward, trying to forget Natalie and his entanglement with her. He really believed the girl loved him, and feeling that he had given her some cause to consider that he cared for her, he felt in honor bound to her now that Doris was out of his reach. Had Doris been free, no one could have kept him from her.

He confidently expected to see her again, for his informant must have had Koerner and the East Indian in view, and was keeping them shadowed. Where they were, he was sure he should find Doris. Gilbert believed they were using her to further their malicious designs. Perhaps she was an unconscious instrument, a victim of hypnosis or a drug. He had come to believe that her mentality was impaired by some drug administered by the East Indian

Every revolution of the wheels, he felt, was bringing him nearer to the girl of his heart. That she was bound to another man, and he practically bound to another girl, could not subdue that delicious little thrill that pulsed through his being at the thought of seeing her again. He persistently crowded from his mind the fact that she was beyond his reach. He was sure that she needed him.

When he reached St. Louis, he registered at the principal hotel.

The next day he visited the police department, and delivered a note the chief of the Secret Service had given him. All aid was promised, and the chief said he would be glad of all information obtainable about the plotters.

Several days passed, and he scoured the city for some trace of the International Free Laborers, when there came a letter, addressed to his Washington hotel, on which was inscribed: "Please forward." He had left his address with the clerk, so that his mail might be sent to him. He opened the letter. It was from his anonymous correspondent, and said:

"Attend meeting Wednesday evening, February 10th at 8 o'clock at No. 442 Blank street, St. Louis. The password is *Deutschland uber allcs*. There you will see some of the plotters against the United States. Be careful, for there is danger if you are suspected of being a detective."

Gilbert had not long to wait. He dressed a little for the part by getting a suit of second-hand clothing that did not fit him very well, neglecting to shave, wore a day-old collar, and omitted his cuffs altogether, so he was an entirely different looking man from the one who had so recently been admitted to a rather exclusive circle of Washington society.

The meeting was to be held over a store in a quiet street, he saw when he spotted the place. He gave the password, and was directed upstairs into a room that was already quite well filled, where he took a seat behind a group of men and women who seemed to be well acquainted, for they were talking animatedly.

The proceedings were of the ordinary kind—rather pronounced in spirit and speech, and denunciatory of existing conditions.

Richardson took careful note of the different speakers, and also of some of the audience. He was decidedly disappointed at the absence of Koerner and Rabanath, as he expected to see them there. He had not looked for Doris, but had taken it for granted that she would not be far away.

He waited till the end of the meeting, then departed.

A report of all he saw and heard was given to the chief of police before he went to his hotel.

When he came down to breakfast the following morning, he was surprised to find another note from his anonymous informant. It contained a copy of the minutes of a secret session of the meeting he attended. They were a revelation to Richardson, and for the first time he realized the extent of the plotting against the United States in Germany's interests. It seemed as if Germany were trying to embroil our government into war with her, depending upon Germans in this country to create trouble. The whole government machinery was needed to checkmate these conspiracies, he figured.

He made two copies of the minutes, one of which he sent to Washington headquarters, the other to his chief in New York.

As Richardson read and re-read the copy of the minutes, he was aghast at the magnitude of the plots

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL FREE LABORERS

THE detective thought of a naturalized Hungarian in his office in New York, and telegraphed his chief to send him on at once. The detective figured that he could join the German society unchallenged, on account of his nationality, and act as a stool-pigeon, by worming himself into the secret meetings.

All the while he was watching the streets and shops for a glimpse of Doris, Koerner or Rabanath. He studied hotel registers, and inquired at the postoffice, but could get no sign of them.

Every day a note came to the detective from his unknown informant, giving the password, which was changed for every meeting of the International Free Laborers.

Sometimes the letters were mailed from one part of the city and sometimes from another, and only occasionally was dropped into the general postoffice.

The information already sent was genuine and of much importance, and he feared that should he attempt to seek the identity of his unknown informant, all further information might cease.

That night he attended a second meeting of the organization, keeping in the background as much as possible, although he met the advances of one or two men and women, who evinced a desire to be friendly.

Before entering the room, he had studied the building from outside. A store was on the ground floor, the meeting-room on the first floor above, while there was another story. He wondered if the top floor were occupied, and if not, if he might be able to hire it, and keep a watch on the men below.

That night he went up the second flight of stairs. All was dark, and the rooms seemed empty. The next morning he went boldly to No. 442 Blank street, and asked in the store if there were rooms to let.

The man said there was an unoccupied floor at the top of the building, but he did not know whether it was to rent or not. Could Richardson have a key to the rooms to see if they would suit? The man replied he could see no objection to that, and handed him a key.

The officer went up to the rooms. They were of the ordinary kind, and were directly over the meeting-room. If he could bore holes in the floor without the fact being observed, he would have an excellent vantage-point. He easily calculated the space between the ceiling of the room below and the floor above, to figure on how long an anger he would need. The danger lie in the holes being observed, and *debris* falling to the floor beneath.

When he attended the meeting, it was of the same nature as the others—inflammatory speeches, emotional appeals to the brotherhood of men, and the right of every one to live his life untrammeled by the tyranny of the law. One speaker said that this war had been gotten up in the interests of the rich businessmen to exploit certain trades, and that it was the duty of every man, woman and child who had a drop of German blood in their veins to come to the rescue of the fatherland.

While the speeches were going on, Richardson was examining the ceiling overhead. Fortunately it was covered with ceiling-paper of a design that would enable him to make a good sized hole that might pass unobserved in the floral design. He located a favorable spot with his eye, so as to have some guide in his operations overhead, and he had taken the precaution to have a duplicate door-key made before returning the original. The next morning, before going into the store, he went upstairs and ex-

amined the apartment again, marking the spot over the particular decoration he had selected. Then he went below and inquired of the man in the store if he yet knew if the place was to let.

He was told that the owner did not care to rent the floor.

"Not even to a quiet tenant?" queried the detective.

The man shook his head.

"He said no; and that is all I know about it."

Richardson thanked him for his trouble, and then went out, determined to use the room without permission. He would now have no difficulty in reaching the rooms, for the hall was practically empty, and the street-door unlocked. He succeeded in getting an auger, and went back that same afternoon to make a hole in the ceiling. Having finished his job, he went back to his hotel to await the time for the evening meeting.

That night he carefully scanned the ceiling of the lodge-room to discover traces of his operations, but could find absolutely none. Evidently he had struck the spots he had aimed for.

At length the meeting was declared adjourned, and the detective was among the first to leave the hall. He waited till he got a chance to slip upstairs, and carefully felt his way in the dark passage to the door for which he had a key.

The door opened readily, and he closed it quietly behind him, leaving himself in the dark, except for the dots of light on the ceiling, which came through the auger-holes from the lighted hall below.

Gilbert made his way to them, and applied his eye to one, but it did not give him a view of the plotters beneath. He tried another, with no better result, and then the third and last, which gave him a restricted view of the table around which were sitting about a dozen persons. A secret session was being held by the officers of the organization.

One woman, whose face he could not see, was apparently acting as secretary, for she was steadily writing, while the others were talking, or reading their reports. He could hear what some of them said; their remarks being chiefly about the fortifications around the harbor of San Francisco. But there was nothing incriminating mentioned.

The detective wanted to see the faces of the ringleaders, so that he might recognize them should he meet them again. He was preparing to leave, so as to take up a hidden position in the street before the hall was emptied, when there was a slight stir below, and he saw that another person had entered the hall.

There was a pause in the proceedings, while the newcomer was making his way toward the chairman's table. It was a man who had not removed his hat till he reached the table, then he laid it down on a chair.

Richardson's heart leaped to his throat. The newcomer was Koerner. From the way he was greeted by the others, it could be seen that he was considered a person of importance, and the proceedings were halted to listen to what he said.

Richardson could not understand, for Koerner spoke in German. There was no use of his remaining any longer at his point of observation, for he had found out one of the pieces of information he had been seeking. Koerner was in the city and was still at work for Germany.

The next thing was to find out where he was staying. He designed to track him. Rising carefully from his knees, he made his way to the door and tried to open it, but it was locked. Then he remembered he had not removed the key. Some one had been in the hall, found the key in the door, locked it, and went off.

He could not break down the door without creating a disturbance, which would defeat the object he had come up to attain. He tried all the other doors of the different rooms, but they, too, were locked. That the people in the hall beneath were preparing to leave, he could tell by the scraping of chairs. He went back to the holes in hopes of getting a better view of the faces of the plotters, but they were already leaving the hall.

The detective had a few matches, which he lighted to take a survey of the place. He found the door an ordinary one, hard to be forced open. Then he peered out of the front windows to see what possibility there was of getting down to the street, but concluded it was not feasible—he was too high above the pavement.

The back way might offer something better. He tried it, and found a fire-escape, which led to the walled-in yard below.

There was no difficulty in reaching the yard, nor in scaling a fence that shut it in from a side-street. By the time he ran around to the front of the building, the door had closed on the last person leaving, who proved to be the janitor. All he had accomplished was to find out that Koerner was in the city.

The next morning young Czerny, his Hungarian assistant, arrived, and was much pleased with the hearty reception accorded him by the detective, whom he had always extravagantly admired. When he heard what Richardson wanted of him, and had received all the information Gilbert had to give concerning the conspiracies, he was enthusiastically interested.

"What is it you want me to do?" he demanded, with sparkling eyes and twitching fingers. He was eager to be up and doing at once.

"Could you work in one of the local factories, get acquainted with the men, and see how far this thing has been going?" suggested Richardson. "I mean a factory where many Germans are employed. There are a lot of them in St. Louis."

"Sure. I suppose you could get some one here to vouch for me."

"I think that can be easily arranged, for the powers at Washington have given me introductions that ought to serve our purpose. You learn all you can inside of the factories, and I'll work on the outside, but it must not be known that we are acquainted. You must make yourself up to look like a workman."

"I'll do that, all right; and I'll want humble lodgings."

"I had thought of that. There is a place opposite the hall, where the local branch of the International Free Laborers meet. If you hire a front-room there, either you or I could watch the coming and going of the members of the secret society and learn the names under which they pass. In the meetings they respond to numbers only."

"You get the room, and I'll move in at once. I'll start at work to-morrow in one of the factories, if you'll get me the job."

Richardson had no difficulty in getting Czerny into a tin factory; in fact, the manager was taken into their confidence, and promised to help all he could. He also engaged a room opposite the meeting-place of the I. F. L., as the International Free Laborerers were known, and by wearing his hand-me-down suit clothes, was enabled to visit Czerny without exciting undue attention. He did not attend the meeting that night, but spent it with the young Hungarian in his room, without a light, in order to watch the people leaving the building opposite.

Richardson thought he would be able to recognize

Koerner, for his bearing was distinctive, alert and erect, quite different from the ordinary man of the street.

The evening seemed interminable, although the two young men sat, and smoked, and planned future operations, but at length it passed, and people began emerging from the door opposite by two's and three's.

They were not concerned with the first exodus. The members of the secret sessions were the detective's game. At last they, too, came out. Koerner was easily distinguishable among them. He thought he recognized Rabanath also, who was a large man, and had a peculiar tigerish grace all his own. Between the two walked a third, smaller and slighter, a slender figure in gray. Richardson thought it looked like the woman who had been acting as secretary, and whose face he had not been able to see.

Could that be Doris? He was sure he would have been able to recognize her, even without seeing her face. It seemed to him every motion of her hands and head were distinctive and like no one's else.

He sprang to his feet, ran down the stairs, out into the street, caught up with the three figures he wished to trail, and followed them to a house.

CHAPTER NINE

TRACKING THE TRAITOR

CZERNY began his work at the factory, and soon made friends with the laborers. He could not decide whether he was getting acquainted with the ones who would best serve his purpose, but he had to trust to chance.

He soon learned that there was great unrest among the hands, but on what account he could not find out. There was much secret talk, and often conversation would cease abruptly when Czerny appeared.

Richardson, on his part, had found out where Koerner was staying, but could get no information concerning him, for when he went to the house into which he had seen the three persons enter the previous night, he found it closed, and there was no response to the door-bell. Finally a woman came out from the lower door of an adjoining house, and said:

"The people who live there are never at home during the day. They have their groceries left here, and one of the gentlemen calls for them at night. Do you wish to leave any word?"

"No, thank you. I want to see the gentleman. I used to know him in the East."

"Which one?"

"The German, although I was also acquainted with the East Indian gentleman."

"German? There's no German living in that house. Mr. Smith is an American, and Mr. Jones is an Englishman. They are inventors, and told me they expect to make a lot of money."

"As they are not the people I am looking for, there is no use in leaving any message," and the officer took his leave, none the less certain that Koerner and Rabanath were the so-called American and Englishman.

"What could they be inventing? Bombs, perhaps; or other instruments of destruction.

From what he heard and understood at the meetings and from the meager reports of the secret sessions that were sent him by his hidden informant, he knew that there was a plot to distribute bombs at various munitions plants simultaneously. The plan seemed to be to arouse the terror of the nation, in order to postpone any action here inimical to German interests.

At the tin factory, Czerny discovered that there was something afoot of momentous import. Sometimes he thought that the workers were not yet fully informed about it.

Richardson was becoming very anxious. The catastrophe might come at any minute at the cost of many lives and valuable property. In the midst of it all, he was also very anxious about Doris.

Czerny asked Richardson to make some excuse to visit the factory where he was employed, to see if he could recognize any of the members of the secret council, but he could identify none.

Richardson now laid the whole matter before the Secret Service Department.

The chief thought the time had come to take decisive measures. They decided to follow the men home from the meeting-hall, then arrest them, and search their lodging-places before they had time to make way with anything incriminating.

An evening was agreed upon, and officers were posted at all exits before the general meeting adjourned.

The ordinary crowd came out, and the detectives awaited eagerly for the others to follow.

"How long do their secret sessions usually last?" asked the sergeant in charge of the squad.

"About an hour," answered Richardson, to whom the question was addressed.

"But we have been waiting two hours."

At that moment the door opened. The watchers drew back in the shadows. A single man came out of the door, carefully locked it, and went down the street. It was the janitor.

They looked up at the windows, but the light had gone out. Then Richardson proposed going to the rear, and climbing up the fire-escape. Two of the men went with him. They easily scaled the fence, and were soon up the iron ladder. The window in the back-room was open, but not a sign of any one could be seen within the hall.

"They have been tipped off, and got out this way, while we were waiting in front," said Richardson in disgust.

"We'll raid the place to-morrow night before they have a chance to get away," exclaimed the chief.

The next night, however, there was no meeting. Instead, in the morning came a communication from Richardson's anonymous correspondent:

"The momentous blow is to be struck very soon. Just when, I cannot find out yet. The bombs are ready, as are the men who are to fire them. Will let you know at once, if I can find out anything more definite."

Richardson hastily swallowed a cup of coffee, but did not wait to eat before taking the message to the chief at the local Secret Service Bureau. He was as much impressed with the import of the communication as the detective had been.

"Something has got to be done, right now!" he exclaimed. He telephoned to his men and sent a message to Czerny to meet Richardson and himself at the bureau at once.

When the Hungarian came hurrying in, the chief asked him if any of the usual workers at the factory were missing.

"A few are absent," was the reply.

"Get their names and addresses at once. I will give you an order to the manager."

Richardson repeated the conversation he had with the

woman next-door to the house he had seen Koerner and Rabanath enter.

"We will raid that house also. The owner may be in league with the spies."

"I have had no breakfast," said Richardson, "and as this promises to be something of a job, I'll go back to the hotel and get something to eat. By that time you will have further information."

The chief nodded, for he already had the phone to his lips.

Richardson fortified himself with a hearty breakfast, as he did not know when he would get another meal. Evidently the time had arrived that would demand every man's most powerful effort. His nerves were tingling, his blood racing, and he felt an unusual sense of exhilaration. At length he was going to do his bit in the service of his country.

As soon as he had eaten, he went back to the bureau, and found the chief awaiting him.

"I have the names of the men who are absent from the factory, and have sent out men to watch them. They shall not escape us this time! I wish to put myself under your command, sir."

"Very well. You watch the house where Koerner and Rabanath are staying, for you are the only one who could recognize them. If either enters or leaves the house, nab them.

Richardson started for the door, and Czerny appeared.

"Take Czerny with you," called out the chief. "It may require two men."

Czerny asked no questions, but ran after Richardson, and they took a taxi.

"Wait a minute," called Richardson to the chauffeur. Then he explained to Czerny:

"We must have some plausible excuse to linger in the neighborhood of Koerner's house, or we may scare away our game. I'll buy some soap. As you are in your working clothes, you look the part to give it out in the form of samples. I'll wait in the taxi, pretending to be renewing your supplies."

"That's all right!" declared Czerny.

The detective directed the chauffeur to take him to the wholesale district, when he laid in a small stock of cakes of soap for Czerny to leave at the various houses.

"You might leave a cake, then follow it up afterwards for an order," suggested Richardson, "for you don't want to get through your job too soon."

"I'll jolly the maids," said Czerny, who was a good-looking young fellow, even in his working clothes.

It took a little time to accomplish their errand. When they reached the street that was to be the scene of their operations, it was comparatively early in the day.

Czerny took his samples, and visited each house in succession, going to the lower door and engaging the person who answered the bell in conversation as long as he decently could. Richardson, in the taxi, kept his eyes on the house occupied by Koerner.

Half an hour went by, when he saw a man approach the house, and go in at the lower door. Richardson did not remember having seen him before. In a short time another man followed the first, going in at the basement-door. Czerny was on the opposite side of the street. An hour went by, and the young Hungarian began on the same side with Koerner's house.

As he was emerging from a fenced-in area, he started back, and withdrew out of sight. A man passed by and entered the watched house. Czerny came to the taxi on pretext of getting more samples, and said hurriedly:

"Did you see me dodge that man?"

"Yes. He entered the house I am watching. Who is he? Do you know him?"

"He works at the factory I'm in, and is one of the men who was always hinting that something was to happen, but would give no satisfaction as to what. He always answered my questions with: 'Wait, and you'll see!'"

"Keep on the watch. If any one leaves the house trail him, and don't lose sight of him until you find where he is going. I will go as quickly as the taxi can take me to the chief. We may round up the whole gang in that house, if I can get a squad of the men here in time."

Instead of going directly to the Secret Service Bureau, Richardson stopped at the hotel, intending to change his clothes.

As he entered the lobby the hotel-clerk signaled him, saying:

"A letter was brought by a messenger-boy, just after you left, and he was very anxious that it should be delivered in a hurry, as it is very important."

Richardson tore off the cover. The paper within contained but a single word: "To-night!"

The officer lost no time in getting to the office of the chief. There was no time to be lost now.

He quickly told what had he had seen, showed the note he received, and then waited impatiently for the chief to speak.

"This is a little sooner than I had expected. We may not be able to get the whole bunch, or to stop some of their nefarious work. However, we will do all we can. The first thing is to get those men at Koerner's house. It is probably their new *rendezvous*."

He gave directions for a squad of his men to make their way in pairs, or singly, to the house. They were to surround it, and keep themselves out of sight as much as possible. The chief said he would go with Richardson.

When they reached the vicinity of the house, Czerny was not to be found.

"He must be trailing some one," said Richardson, "for I told him not to lose sight of any man who might leave."

"We will wait here till my men arrive," said the chief quietly.

While he was speaking another man entered the house. He was soon followed by another, and still more came.

Richardson was keyed-up to the highest pitch. He could see nothing in the affair to cause the chief's amusement.

In the course of half an hour another man approached, followed by Czerny at a distance.

The Secret Service men were now at their respective posts, awaiting the signal. When the chief gave it, the men went swarming at both doors in front, and in the backyard. A shrill whistle sounded, followed by the crashing of wood. They were smashing open the doors with axes and crowbars.

CHAPTER TEN

A TERRIBLE CATASTROPHE

EVERY man had been assigned to do certain work. Every room was to be raided, and the house searched from garret to cellar.

The crashing of timbers brought men, with white faces, into the halls, upstairs and down. Not a word was said, the detectives going about their business with energy. All the men who had been in the house backed into the rooms from which they had emerged, swearing and asking what was happening.

They had no chance to conceal anything, or to get out of the back windows, as some tried to do. Every man was covered with a revolver, and lined up.

Some of the officers were left to guard them, while others ransacked the house. There was the sound of a struggle upstairs and the fall of a heavy body, and presently a man dashed downstairs and over the railing. He was followed by two plainclothes-men, who also used the railing instead of the steps. But the man got down to the basement, into the front-room, and slammed the door in the faces of his pursuers.

They tried to break it in, but found it to be of iron, with no knob or latch on the outside. They could hear the man moving about inside.

"He will try to get away," called one of the men, and he dashed out to the front, while the other went out back.

No signs of the man trying to escape could be discovered.

"The door will have to be blown in," said the chief, when informed of the man's disappearance. "Search the cellar."

Nothing was revealed in the cellar but a lot of junk, sections of gas-pipes, bottles, galvanized iron, steel and rags. No chemicals were found in the bottles, all of which seemed to be empty; neither did any of the objects that cluttered the cellar-floor appear to be of any value or use.

Word was now phoned to the police-station for a patrol-wagon to take the prisoners. The detectives had finished their search, but had discovered nothing of particular value. The plotters had been too cunning to have any plans or correspondence of any kind. Nothing was found even in cipher. Evidently their instructions were carried on by word of mouth, through trusties.

The chief had not given up the idea of getting the man who was hiding in the front basement. So long as the back and rear were well guarded, it was thought that he could not escape.

Richardson went upstairs to examine the rooms. In the front, on the top-floor, which was comfortably furnished, and even with a certain degree of luxury, he found a lady's slipper. He opened the closet-door, and saw there a woman's apparel, which had apparently been thrown to the floor in the hasty search of the detectives. The drawers of the dressing-case were open, and the contents tumbled about. What was his amazement to see a small snapshot of himself. How had it escaped the notice of the detectives? Then he remembered the occasion when it had been taken. He had been with Doris Cameron and Natalie Fairbanks in Central Park, and Doris had taken her kodak with her.

Evidently she had been here! But where is she now?

He looked around the room as if for an answer. A narrow bed stood in one corner, daintily covered, as if with the owner's own handiwork. It was the kind of a bed a young girl would select for her own use. There was a *chaise longue*, on which was a book, a sheer linen handkerchief, with the monogram of "D. C." Richardson picked it up and slipped it into his breast-pocket. It seemed to him he recognized its faint frangrance. He had always liked it, perhaps because it was associated with Doris.

With a last lingering look around the room, which she must have recently occupied, he turned and left it. How glad he was that she was not in the house when it had been forcibly entered!

He walked slowly downstairs, and could hear the movements of the men and the quick words of command. Inside the old-fashioned parlor he saw a dozen men lined up against the wall. Not a face did he recognize. Had it been Koerner who had managed to elude the detectives and shut himself in the room below? He, of all others, was the one who should be apprehended.

The double doors opening to the street were open, with broken locks and split panels. He looked out. There was a curious crowd about the stoop, and coming up the street was a patrol-wagon.

He saw a slight figure in gray walk rapidly down the street, and as she saw the crowd about the house her steps were accelerated, till she came on a half-run.

Threading her way through the crowd, she reached the stoop, and began to ascend. Then Richardson recognized her.

It was Doris!

He went out to meet her, but she waved him aside and entered the hall, looking about apprehensively. Then she looked into the parlor, at the men inside, then came toward the door.

"Where is he?" she whispered, her face white and drawn.

"Whom do you mean, Doris?" asked Richardson kindly.

She shudderer, as she answered scarcely above her breath:

"Koerner!"

"I haven't seen him."

"Did he get away?"

"I don't know. Some one is in the basement, behind the iron door. We have not been able to get at him yet. They are waiting to blow the door in."

"Don't let them do it," she said, laying her hand on his arm.

"I can't help it, Doris. I am sorry if it distresses you, but——"

The wagon drew up before the door. She stood there as if blocking the entrance.

"Please!" and she held out her hands in an appealing little gesture.

"But, Doris——"

"Don't let them in!"

There was terror in her voice and eyes.

"How can I help it?"

"Go out to them and stop them. Get the other men out, if you must, but don't let the others in!"

"She fears for her husband," was Richardson's thought. "I can't interfere now!"

"If I had known——" he began.

"You are losing time! Can you do nothing to prevent them from coming in?"

"Nothing; absolutely nothing. But you come away with me."

She stood still as if petrified.

"Listen!"

There was a slight sound in the basement. Doris shuddered, then her face relaxed slightly from its tenseness.

"Perhaps he is getting away!" she whispered.

They could hear some one moving below. Then there was a step on the stairs. An instant later Koerner appeared, his face inflamed with fury.

Two or three detectives tried to get at him, but he waved an object that he held in his hand, and shouted:

"Keep off!"

The men sprang back, their eyes fixed in horror on the small object he was waving in front of him.

Koerner's eyes fell on Doris, and a look of malignant hate convulsed his features.

"It is you," he shouted, "that has brought this thing on us!"

Doris made no answer, but said in a low tone to Richardson:

"Get out of the house at once!"

The detective made no attempt to obey. Instead, his eyes were fixed on Koerner. He was measuring the distance between them, preparatory to spring and knock him down or to wrench that murderous object from his hand.

"Stand back!" shouted Koerner. "I'll attend to you later!" He hurled the object at Doris, before Richardson could reach him. But the detective frustrated his design by shielding the girl with his larger body. The bomb struck Richardson, but bounced off his body to the floor, where it exploded.

There was a sharp report, a cloud of smoke, the sound of crashing and rending, mingled with shouts of terror and shrieks of pain. The doors were blown outward, window-panes were shattered, the flooring splintered. There were cries of horror from the street, people rushed out of doors, and stood some distance from the house, not knowing what was to follow.

Some policemen rushed up the steps, sticks and revolvers in hand. There was no use for either then, for human forms lay strewn about the rooms and halls in all sorts of positions.

Every one within the building seemed to have been either killed, injured, or stunned, for there was little sign of life when the police began first-aid. Some one telephoned for help. Ambulances arrived, and doctors began looking after the victims. More patrol-wagons were almost simultaneously on the spot.

Gilbert Richardson lay in front of Doris, his body shielding hers.

The men in the parlor escaped with less injury than those in the hall, although the whole house was almost a wreck. The small bomb, easily held with one hand, contained a most deadly explosive.

Richardson was taken to the hospital, again victim of his desire to serve his country. For days he lay in a stupor, although he did not seem to be badly injured. The doctors said his condition was probably due to shock.

Then came a period when he hovered on the borderland, oblivious of outside impressions, but seemed to be living over times of the past.

He was back in New York with Doris, and she was kind to him, and he enjoyed her society. Again he was in Washington, when she denied him recognition. Sometimes she was near him, sometimes far away, but always he was trying to take her hand, to feel its cool imprint on his fevered brow.

He babbled, sometimes whimpered, then had long periods of quiescence. Sometimes he was delirious, and called and begged, and demanded, and tried to leave his bed to go in search of his loved one.

Quieter days came after this; days when he lay as if sleeping, when he would take his nourishment without protest, days of comparative surcease from pain.

Some of the injured men died from their wounds, others recovered, while he still hovered on the borderland.

A broadly-spread plot was traced in all of its ramifications, and many more arrests were made. Not all the conspirators had been halted, for reports came from different parts of the country of fires, sinkings, explosions, strikes and wrecks on land and sea. Koerner had either run away or had been blown to atoms. Part of his clothing had been discovered.

Doris had escaped miraculously, for her lover had received the force in his body that saved hers. It seemed the sport of chance that he should have remained intact, with only surface wounds, when those farther away had been worse injured.

News of the affair went far and wide. Papers all over the country printed long descriptions, giving pictures of the chief victims. In New York, where Richardson was so well known, there was a lively interest in his condition, and telegrams of inquiry flooded his hotel and the hospital where he had been taken.

All this he learned afterwards. Now he was interested in nothing but to be free from that awful pain and that haunting sense of fear, to feel the touch of that loved hand, of the soft caress of lips on his cheek. Some day he hoped he would open his eyes and see Doris.

The time came, however, when the fever abated, when his strength returned sufficiently to take an interest in his surroundings. He looked about him wonderingly, at the white-capped nurse at his bedside, some one he had never seen before. She bent over him when she saw that he was cognizant of his surroundings, and said soothingly:

"You are feeling much better?" She held a glass containing a cool liquid, from which he drank, and was refreshed.

"Where am I?" he asked in tones so weak and tremulous that he thought some one else was speaking.

"In bed and all right," was the answer.

"Where is she?"

The nurse looked puzzled for an instant, then answered quickly:

"It is not time for her visit yet. Sleep a little now, and when you awaken you will find her here."

"Send for her."

"I will if you will promise to try and sleep till she comes."

For answer he closed his tired eyelids.

"Wake me when she arrives," he murmured.

They sent for her, and she came very soon. He was still sleeping.

"Is he all right now? Will he live?" she asked eagerly.

"We can't tell yet, but certainly have strong grounds for hope. You must be here when he wakes."

"Of course. How long do you suppose he will sleep?"

"Hours, perhaps; or minutes; one cannot tell. But he must find you here when he awakens, if you would have him improve."

"I will stay all night, if necessary."

It was weary waiting, to sit beside that silent couch, watch that pale drawn face, note the short breathing, the twitching muscles. She put out her hand and touched his. His finger closed around hers. He spoke, and she leaned close over him to hear what he said.

"Darling! Don't leave me again!"

"Never, my loved one!"

He opened his eyes and turned them slowly, hopefully toward her. Then it was as if a veil fell over them and quenched the eager light. The hand he was holding, the face he had expected to see were not those of Doris, but of Natalie Fairbanks!

CHAPTER ELEVEN

AN UNWILLING BRIDEGROOM

IT seemed as if the bed dropped from beneath Gilbert, his body following it into the very depths of desolation.

He was too weak to utter a protest, and lay with closed eyes and averted head. The nurse came over, felt his

pulse, and motioned to Natalie to leave. In the hall whither she followed her, she whispered:

"The joy of seeing you was to much for him in his enfeebled condition. Come again to-morrow."

Natalie nodded without other reply, but a fleeting expression crossed her face as she turned it away from the nurse. She was not deceived as to the cause of Richardson's depression. She had known during his period of delirium and partial coma whom it was he was calling and who he thought was by his side. That others were mistaken was none of her affair.

When she had read of the catastrophe, she took the first train wastward, so as to be on the spot. Should Richardson die, she wanted to assume the rôle of a stricken near-bride.

He had written her several brief notes, but she would have been obtuse, which she was not, if she had not realized that he cared nothing for her. That his love was not hers did not concern her so much, if she could only get the substantial advantage of marriage with a young man of such excellent prospects.

She really believed Doris to be married to Koerner. If she had not believed it, there would have been no difference in her designs, now that her one rival was out of the way. She had confidence enough in her powers to please to believe she could make Richardson forget Doris, so soon as he should have accomplished this special business, which she was confident would bring him munificent reward.

It had suited her purpose admirably when she found that the sick man was calling for his sweetheart, whose name was not mentioned. Usually he used some endearing term of address, and when she announced that she was betrothed to the young man, she was received gladly, the doctors believing her presence would have a salutary effect on his fevered imaginings. She had visited him daily, and spent hours by his side, playing the part of devoted sweetheart inimitably, and winning the admiration of doctors and nurses.

She gave no hint of disappointment at his apparent failure to recognize her, although the nurse pretended that he had. She promised to come the next day, or as soon as she was summoned.

Richardson asked no questions. He seemed scarcely conscious. Vague impressions were passing through his mind. He did not associate Natalie with the lady of his dreams; she would come later, and he must wait patiently, and do as the nurse bade him. He tried to be good and patient, fearing to ask for Doris, lest he would be denied her presence altogether.

The next day when Natalie came, he was awake, and received her with weak cordiality, accepting the big bunch of roses which she had brought him with seeming gratitude. He did not attempt to talk, and Natalie made a very brief call, promising to come again the next day.

So the days passed, with a daily visit from the wrong girl. Gilbert's heart was growing steadily sicker with hope deferred. At length he ventured one question.

"Where is Doris, Mrs.——;" and he paused, not knowing what to call her.

"Do you mean Miss Fairbanks?" queried the nurse.

He shook his head.

"No; I mean Doris Cameron. Was she killed?" he asked, a terrible fear then seizing him.

"Oh, you mean the lady whose life you saved?" the nurse exclaimed.

He assented.

"Why, it was the queerest thing that ever happened. While they were carrying off the wounded at the house where the explosion occurred she disappeared. No one remembered who had taken her away. Every one thought she had been carried off in an ambulance, injured."

"You don't know if she was killed?"

"No one knows. Both she and her husband disappeared. She was not dead when the ambulances arrived. She seemed only to be suffering from the concussion, so the doctors gave their first-aid to those more seriously injured."

Richardson made no further allusion to her.

"Her husband!" those words kept repeating themselves over and over to his bewildered mind.

Giving Doris up now, he began to look forward with pleasure to Natalie's visits. She helped him to forget Doris. She read to him, and talked to him sympathetically, and sat by him silently when he wished to rest. He did not resent the nurse's assumption that they were to be married, for he remembered what had been expected of him before his injury. He had a great deal to do before he could think of getting married. The first thing was to get well, the next to go after Koerner! He never would give up that quest. Then, perhaps, he might see Doris again! But what good was it for him to see Doris. It always reopened the old wound, the hurt of which was so acute. "Her husband!" So long as Doris had one husband she could not have another. He might marry, he supposed, and Natalie would do as well as anyone else. His reasoning was still very inchoate, but strength was returning rapidly now, and with physical power came the power of clearer thinking.

She brought books, and read, and chatted, biding her time and opportunity.

One day she felt that the hour had come for her final act. He had seemed cheerful, hopeful and happy, and was talking eagerly of getting out of the hospital.

"If I could only get away from here, I am sure I'd get stronger much sooner. They make a regular mollycoddle of a man here. I must not do this nor that, and must drink this and eat that. What I want is plenty of fresh air, solid food, and hard exercise!"

Natalie slipped out of her chair beside his bed, and laid her head on the pillow by his, so that their cheeks touched.

"Darling," she murmured, "while your poor head was in such a dreadful state, you kept begging me not to leave you, and I promised I never would. I have kept my promise so far, as you know, and feel as you do, that you would recover much sooner if you were either in a home of your own, or at least among more cheerful surroundings. But you need some one to take care of you beside hired help. If you go away from here, I could not be with you, unless——" she hesitated.

"Unless what?" he asked.

"If you had not showed your heart to me and to others so absolutely while you were ill I should never have thought of what I am about to propose. But I know that you understand—that we understand each other. You are not demonstrative, and I had no idea how much you really cared for me till you called for me so pleadingly, and kissed my hand, and held me so close to your bedside. Nothing could tear me away from you now, dearest; still I feel that it would be better for me to have a recognized right to be your nurse, to care for you, do for you, and bring you back to your former magnificent health and strength."

She paused an instant, and his heart felt cold within him. Had he really done those things to Natalie? He had thought his memories, vague as they were, had been but a part of his delirium.

"So soon as you feel able to leave this place I shall have a minister come to marry us, then I can go where you go, and be with you all the time, and never leave you again," she went on.

He shivered slightly, and pulled the bedclothes tightly about him, so as partially to cover his face. He was trapped!

"Later we will talk of this," he answered. "I had not thought of going away at once. I want to be a little stronger; and besides, I don't believe the doctors would consent."

He was sparring for time, although he knew in the end he would be bound hand and foot to the girl for the rest of his life, if she had her way. He was still so weak, he did not feel any fighting force left. The doctors would protect him for a while at least.

He had a relapse that night, and much to his relief, the doctors forbade all company, even that of Natalie. Richardson was grateful for the respite, although he knew it must be a brief one.

Meanwhile, Natalie made all preparations for a wedding. She visited the stores and provided herself with an entirely new outfit, calling upon her father for the cash, and telling him that she was to be married to Richardson within a few days. Mr. Fairbanks approved the connection, and telegraphed a substantial sum to his daughter, congratulating her on the alliance.

She also engaged a *suite* at the hotel where Richardson had been staying previous to his accident, and gave much publicity to her anticipated marriage.

The daily papers made much of the affair, and the articles were copied in the dailies of other cities; Mr. Fairbanks himself putting a notice in the principal metropolitan papers.

Natalie made no attempt to see Richardson, she was satisfied to wait. She felt that he could not escape her now. The hospital superintendent was to notify her as soon as he could be removed with safety.

Richardson had no idea that any publicity was given to this one-sided affair. He was putting the matter out of his mind as much as he could, feeling that he was safe so long as he remained in the hospital, and that he would not consent to any idea of a ceremony being performed until he was up and about.

Natalie was notified, and came to see him, bringing a great bunch of American Beauties.

"Oh, how glad I am that you are so much better, and that you may get out of this dismal place. I have a home awaiting you, so cozy; a regular nest for just us two!" she exclaimed.

She did not think it necessary to state the price of this cozy little nest; he could find that out later.

"The doctor says I am to take a long rest, and I couldn't think of making you share a long period of tedious convalescence," he said evasively.

"That's all right. I'll just love it. To think I shall have you all to myself without that miserable detective business taking you away at any moment."

"Better wait," he murmured.

She laughed, patted his hand, and kissed him, saying:

"You just leave everything to me. I'll bring the minister here Saturday, and we'll be married with only nurses and doctors for witnesses. Then we'll go to our own apartment, and postpone our honeymoon-trip until you are stronger. This is Thursday, and there'll be only one day between. Would you care very much if I don't come to-morrow?" she asked.

"I can wait another day. I am going to sit up most of the time, so as to see how I'll get on."

"That's fine! You'll be ready to be taken away Saturday, I am sure. I'll get the most comfortable limousine in town to take you in."

Natalie spent the next day shopping, finishing the little details she had left until the last moment. She called up the minister whom she had engaged to marry them, and personally inspected the cars in a public garage, so as to select the most luxurious one, and to engage it for Saturday afternoon.

She gave orders for flowers to be sent to the hotel to be ready for the reception of the bridegroom. She laughed to herself as she thought how matters were reversed. She was making arrangement for the reception of the groom, instead of his making it for the bride.

Friday was unpleasant, raw and sleety; but Saturday morning came bright and clear. She telephoned to the hospital late Friday afternoon, to inquire after her expected bridegroom, and did not think it necessary to make any inquiries Saturday morning, so reassuring had been the report concerning his continued improvement. There was not the slightest doubt about his being able to be moved the following day.

Saturday afternoon came. Natalie sent a taxi for the minister, and had herself taken to the hospital in the limousine she had engaged for the sick man.

She and the minister met at the entrance, and went upstairs together. As she went to the familiar room, she was surprised to find the door open, and cleaners in charge.

"Where is Mr. Richardson?" she demanded of one of the women.

"I don't know, ma'am. Better inquire at the desk."

Natalie flew to the elevator and went down to the main floor.

"Where is Mr. Richardson?" she asked.

The secretary reached for her book.

"Whom did you say?" she asked with exasperating slowness.

"Gilbert Richardson!" Natalie fairly bit off each syllable.

The nurse turned over a few pages, then said, without looking up:

"He left this morning."

CHAPTER TWELVE

AN ESCAPE

RICHARDSON was inclined to resign himself to the inevitable; he felt too weak to fight. Then a reaction took place, and he tried to contrive some means to postpone the ceremony, at least.

An idea came to him, when he asked to dress in his ordinary clothes, and the nurse informed him that the suit he had worn at the time of the explosion was unfit to wear. She suggested that he might better send to his hotel for an entire outfit.

He asked for pen and paper, and wrote to the hotel-clerk, with whom, as was his custom, he had contracted a sort of friendship, asking him to pack up what he would need, and as a great favor to bring the suit-case himself to the hospital instead of sending it by a messenger, getting there Friday afternoon, if possible.

The young man of the desk complied with Richardson's request. The detective told him that he wanted to leave the hospital on Saturday morning, and would like to have him send some one to take him away.

"But I thought the wedding was to take place in the afternoon?" said the clerk in surprise.

"How did you know about it?" asked Richardson in dismay.

"My dear boy, everybody knows it. The papers are full of it. Such a romantic proceeding; what are you thinking of, to expect the reporters to slight such an opportunity?"

"But I am not going to be married Saturday," asserted Richardson.

"Is it called off? I am sorry to hear——"

"It hasn't been on yet," responded Richardson a little sullenly.

"But all the arrangements have been made. The lady has engaged the best *suite* in the house, has ordered the rooms filled with flowers—— I hope I am not indiscreet, and giving anything away."

"I know she expects to marry me on Saturday, and to take care of me for the rest of my life, but I have something to accomplish before I can think of marriage, and no one is going to make a mollycoddle out of me so long as I have sense and strength enough to resist."

Ellison, the clerk, laughed.

"You object to the captive part."

"Decidedly. What I want you to do is to engage a good man-attendant to look after me until I am solidly on my feet again. You need not haggle about the cost. I want a really desirable person who would not only look out for me, but keep people away—travel with me, or do anything, in short, that I ask of him."

"I know just such a man. He was asking me to recommend him to one of our patrons. I'll have him come in to see you to-night, and you can make your own arrangements with him."

"Thank you, Ellison. If ever I can be of material service to you, don't hesitate to make use of me."

"If you could get me a New York job, I'd bless the day when first we met."

"I think I can safely promise that, once I can get to New York. Say, why not take the job of looking after me? Give up your place at the desk, and go with me to New York. Later on I can introduce you to the New York hotel owners."

"Done! I'll be your man to-morrow. At least, I know I shall be a gentleman's gentleman," he added with a laugh. "Tell me just what you want."

"To be saved from being married in spite of myself. The woman in the case is scheming to rope me into a marriage which I do not want."

"I'll undertake that. What about those rooms at the hotel that have been reserved for you?"

"Name the price, and I'll write a check at once. Why couldn't you engage a drawing-room section on a train, and we can leave first thing in the morning?"

"Are you strong enough to travel?"

"Strong enough to travel, but not to get married," he responded with a whimsical smile.

"I'll engage the section to-night. The train is due at ten-fifteen a. m. Would that be too early?"

"Not a bit of it! I'd leave at midnight in order to get away."

"I'll leave a note for her with the secretary."

The sick detective's spirits brightened immediately at the prospect of evading that marriage. He wrote a letter to Natalie, refusing to accept her sacrifice, and saying he would never bind a beautiful young woman to a man broken in health, whose recovery to normal strength was by no means assured. And he thanked her for the attentions she had lavished on him, which he said he hoped to be able some day to requite, signing himself, "her friend, Gilbert Richardson."

"She ought to be so indignant when she learns that I have skipped that she will never want to see me again," he chuckled to himself.

Ellison telephoned that he had made all arrangements, and would be at the hospital at nine forty-five prompt, with all of Richardson's effects. He also told him that he had explained to the nurse the necessity of an earlier departure than had been anticipated.

"That saves me from all embarrassing explanations," said Richardson to himself. "That man is going to earn his salary!"

He had already asked Ellison to notify the Secret Service chief that he was about to return to his home in New York, where he could be found at any time when he might be needed for the trial of the German spies. Still, although there had been no obstacle put in the way of his departure, he was in a tense state of nervous apprehension.

At length the summons came, and Richardson walked forth on Ellison's arm—a free man. He looked apprehensively up and down the street before entering the car that Ellison had brought for him, but nothing retarded his departure. Half an hour later he was speeding on his way to New York.

Home surroundings seemed to agree with him, for his strength rapidly returned, and it was not many days before he was able to redeem his promise to Ellison to get him a good position in the hotel business.

The officer did not return to the detective agency immediately. He had received no communication from his anonymous correspondent since the explosion of the bomb, nor had he any clue as to Koerner's whereabouts.

There were reports in the papers of an attempted uprising in India against British rule. It would be reasonable to suppose that the two might be contemplating a trip to India in order to escape the consequences of their acts in this country.

A strict watch was kept on all outgoing ships from New York, but they might go by way of the Pacific Ocean.

The detective called at the Cameron residence, saw Doris' family, and told them all he knew about her. He was hoping that she might have communicated with them. But he learned that they had no direct communication from her. Once in a while an unsigned note would arrive, saying that Doris was well, and would return at the earliest possible moment.

"It is certainly most mysterious," sighed Mr. Cameron. "Doris knows how much I would object to her marriage to a man whom I must regard as a traitor to his adopted country."

"It is most strange," agreed Richardson. "My idea is that Koerner has given her some drug, or hypnotized her, and it has destroyed her memory."

"Then why should she send us any word at all?" demanded Mr. Cameron.

"Are you sure that she writes the notes?"

"Who else would send those notes?" asked her father hopelessly.

"Are they typewritten, unsigned, undated, and always dropped into the general postoffice?" asked Richardson.

"Yes; but how should you know?"

"Because I have received several such anonymous communications myself, and I believe they come from Doris."

"If we could only find her!" groaned Mr. Cameron.

"I shall find her, Mr. Cameron, and when I do I shall persuade her to return to you!" said Richardson.

"Oh, Gilbert, if you could do that—— Words fail me!" and the old man gulped back his tears.

It was no idle promise of the detective's, that he would find Doris. Koerner's wife though she be, he would not rest satisfied until he had induced her to return to her family.

In the crowds of women thronging the elevated, the subway, the shopping districts, even places of dubious character, Richardson hunted for the slender form he loved; for the sweet face, from which had fled all the old joyous gayety; for those sad, unrecognizing eyes. Then one day, when he least expected, and when he had almost given up expectation, if not hope, he saw her!

It was on one of the elevated-stations that he caught a glimpse of the graceful little figure. It did not need a glance at the face to assure him that he had found the object of his search, for he would never forget the poise of the small head, or that graceful carriage of the perfect form.

He pushed through the crowd close behind her, and touched her shoulder. She turned with a startled look, and as she recognized him, her expression gave place to one of gladness.

"Oh!" she exclaimed. "I am so glad to see you about once more, and apparently as well as ever!"

"Doris! Then you really remember me at last!" he cried, seizing her hands in his.

"I have never forgotten you," she whispered, with downcast eyes.

"Why have you denied yourself to me, and pretended not to know me in the past?"

She was about to reply, when there came a little cry; another slight girlish form threaded the crowd, two arms were thrown about Richardson's neck, a soft face laid against his, and a voice breathed into his ear:

"Oh, dearest! To see you at last, and so fine and fit!"

He managed to disengage himself from Natalie's grasp, and looked for Doris, but she had disappeared, a shocked expression on her face.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

DORIS BIDS RICHARDSON TO LEAVE HER

"GILBERT, how could you ever leave me in so cruel a manner? But I'm not chiding you, for I know you would not have done so if you could have helped yourself. It is all right now that we have met again!"

"Beg pardon, ma'am!"

To her surprise, she found her only auditor was a bewildered old gentleman, whom she was clutching in the shifting crowd, for Richardson had not only slipped away, but was skurrying after a swiftly-moving gray figure that was heading for the cars.

The gray figure had a decided start, and was already in one of the forward cars of the long train when Richardson reached the last one. The door was already closing, but he jumped abroad, got his foot against the gate and squeezed through, thereby calling upon himself some very vigorous oaths from the guard, until he flashed his shield.

The detective was packed in a crowd, and could not move. Several stations were passed, and he could not reach Doris.

At length he pushed his way to her side.

"Doris, why did you leave me?" he gasped nervously.

"I had to catch the train," she replied, hastening her steps.

"Why are you in such a hurry to get away from me?" he persisted.

"I want to get home," she evaded.

"I shall go with you."

To his surprise she made no more demur. They went down the stairs together, Richardson making no effort to force her to talk. He would have time for that when they were alone. He would not leave her until he received some adequate explanation of her strange conduct.

She led the way swiftly to a large apartment-house, and to a small *suite* of three rooms.

"Here is where I am staying," she said simply, removing her hat and taking off her coat. "Will you take off your coat and sit down?" Her manner was conventional.

"Yes, thank you," and he promptly removed his coat and gloves, and sat down. He was in no hurry now. She could not put him out bodily, and he could take care of Koerner, should he appear, despite his recent illness.

"I'll give you some tea," she said; and going to the kitchenette brought therefrom a tray on which was arranged a light repast for one, but by adding a plate, cup and saucer, could be made to serve for two. She made tea, went to the cupboard, and brought out some canned things and a box of crackers.

He ate with a relish, and made no attempt to hasten its conclusion. When they had finished, and she had removed the tray and sat down, as if there was nothing more to be done, he said:

"Now, Doris, tell me everything from the very beginning."

"That is a large order!" she smiled faintly.

"In the first place, where are Koerner and Rabanath?"

"I don't know."

"Isn't he living with you here?"

She shook her head.

"I have not seen him since the explosion."

"Is he in hiding?"

"I don't think so. He escaped from the wreck unharmed, and came directly to New York. He knew his career was ended here, and he had promised Rabanath that if he would help in the propaganda here, Koerner would go with him to India to help the insurrection there."

"Yes; I have heard of that proposed rebellion."

"Yes," she said simply. "It was I who told you."

"You told me?" Then a light suddenly broke in upon his bewildered brain. "Then you were my anonymous correspondent?"

She nodded.

Richardson rose and took several turns of the narrow room.

"You were giving warning against your own husband?"

"He was not my husband, nor never has been."

"Not your husband!" Richardson's remarks seemed to be confined to repeating what she had said.

"What about the marriage license?"

"It was to reassure my parents."

"Why did you not write them, and relieve their anxiety?"

"To have done so would have brought disaster to them. Koerner threatened to kill them if I did. So long as I agreed to keep from communicating with my family, either directly or indirectly, they were safe. Even if I sent word in an indirect manner, their death would follow."

She shivered a little.

"Oh, my darling; what you must have lived through!" He would have taken her in his arms, but she pushed him gently from her.

"Sit down," she said, and I will tell you all."

Richardson obeyed, and she told him how she went to Koerner's studio to see his curios, her accidental dis-

covery of the treasonable plans, and her conviction that both he and the Hindu were spies, working in the interests of the German government. She told of the fluid in the jar she had accidentally broke, and how, when she had refused to be silent on her discovery of the machinations against the United States, they had threatened her, and how she had tried to escape by both doors, and at length of her attempt to appeal to the passersby on the street below through the open window that had been raised to give her air to relieve her from the faintness caused by the subtle Oriental perfume. Then how the odor again overpowered her, and she knew no more.

"When I recovered my senses," she went on, "I was lying in a strange room, comfortably, but plainly furnished, in care of an elderly woman, who was very attentive, and did all she could for me, even taking my messages and notes to my home, as I supposed, but she must have delivered them to Koerner instead of to their proper destination. I was ill for some time, my mind seemed clouded, although my memory never entirely left me. The idea came to make use of that clouded mental condition to spy on my captors in the interest of our government. When the old woman spoke of anything of the past, I pretended not to remember.

"One day Koerner, who paid my expenses, came to see me, but I acted as if I had never seen him before. He tried to find out how much I knew, but I apparently knew nothing of his plans. I formed the plan of not trying to escape, but of doing everything in my power to foil their evil designs by anonymously posting you. My main desire was to get word to my family, and for many days I thought I had succeeded in doing so, but that woman attendant foiled me.

"I read in the papers that no one knew what had become of me. I was a close prisoner, and could get no word out of my room. Koerner was very considerate in every way, except in giving me my freedom or letting me communicate with my parents. He showed that he wanted to marry me, and I never evinced any distaste for his presence; instead, I tried to lead him on to a declaration, to dupe him. When he finally proposed, I consented to marry him. Then he again made me promise not to try to communicate with my family directly or indirectly, saying that should it be discovered that any one knew what had become of me, the vengeance of the order of spies, to which he belonged, would be wreaked upon my father, or if I tried to get any word to you, you would surely be assassinated.

"By this time I found we were in Chicago, whither he had taken me in my drugged condition. I consented to his conditions. We went to the Marriage License Bureau, got the license, which I insisted should be in our proper names, and then before we had a chance to use it, I threw it into the street, sure that the police would discover it. In fact, I took good care to drop it not far from a policeman, so its import would reach my parents, and relieve their minds. Next I began to fight Koerner off, postponing our marriage on one pretext or another. He was growing rather tired of my caprices, but he needed a woman helper, and I agreed to help him and bear his name if he would leave me alone. He very readily agreed, for he was attracted by a young woman of German extraction by that time, and besides, his whole mind, and most of his heart, too, was engrossed in the one desire of serving his own country. My thoughts were also directed on helping my country, and I thought the best way to do so was to continue pretending to agree to do what he wanted of me. I kept track of all his plans, so far as I was able, and sent you word every time I learned anything important, thinking you would know what to do. My confidence in you was certainly justified."

"But, Doris, why did you pretend not to know me when we met in Washington?"

"To protect you from those two men. If they thought I recognized you, your life would have been forfeited. As it was, they thought you were too much interested in me, and that is why they sent that message, which you supposed came from me, bringing you to the house. Everything that came to me was first examined by one or the other; everything that went out was subjected to the same scrutiny. I was never allowed to be alone. Either a maid, the chauffeur, or Koerner or Rabanath was with me. I could not give you warning that first day in Washington, because the chauffeur was watching me, and his orders were to report everything to Koerner."

"Did you know that they expected to attack me?" he asked.

"The first I knew of their design was when you were carried unconscious upstairs and put to bed."

"Was I unconscious long?"

"The effects of the liquor passes off in twenty-four hours, unless the victim inhales it again. I think they drugged you when they took you to Chicago. Were you very ill?"

"I wasn't really ill at all. I felt as if I had been making a night of it."

"Then you recognize the symptoms?" she jested. It was the first return to her old manner.

He rose to his feet, and held out his arms.

"To think you are not that rascal's wife, after all! To know that you are free, and that I can love you, and you can love me! I shall never let you out of my sight again!"

She looked at him strangely.

"I don't understand," she said rather coldly.

"Don't you love me, Doris?"

His tone was full of love and pleading.

She did not answer immediately, and when he would have approached her, she fended him off with her outspread hands.

He drew back, and regarded her in perplexity.

"I thought you loved me, Doris," he said gently. "But, of course, if you don't, that changes matters. I will not annoy you, but tell me first, if you really do not care for me. Don't you care for me?"

"Yes; I care for you in a way," she said slowly. "I trusted you."

There was the slightest emphasis on the word "trusted."

"And now?" he persisted.

"I don't know!"

"Don't know! Surely you know if you love me?"

"Please go," she said weakly, sinking back into the chair from which she had risen at his approach.

"You want me to go?" he asked almost angrily.

She bent her head, not meeting his eyes.

"Oh, Doris! I can't believe it; I won't believe it! Tell me again. Do you want me to go forever out of your life?"

"Go!" was the only answer.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

CONCLUSION

RICHARDSON seemed dazed for a moment, then he sprang forward, lifted Doris up from her chair, and strained her to his heart.

"I shan't go! You can't make me! You are mine, and I shall never give you up!" he exclaimed passionately.

He rained kisses on her hair and that part of her face accessible to his lips, for she lay against his breast, her cheek against the fierce throbbing of his heart.

"You may not love me now, but you will, I swear it!" he went on.

He held her at arm's length, then crushed her to him again. She struggled a little to free herself, and he released her just sufficiently to look up into his face.

"Gilbert! How about Natalie!" she exclaimed.

He gazed into her eyes an instant, then broke into a joyous laugh.

"Natalie? She can go hang! You are the only wife I'll ever have!"

"But your marriage, which I read was to take place——"

"Marriage nothing! I skipped! If that's all that has been troubling you, forget it! That was Natalie's proposition, and I had a hard fight to keep out of it. Just think of trying to trap a little weakling like me!" and he laughed again.

She snuggled against him, relenting, and said:

"Gilbert, my heart almost broke when I thought you had forgotten me!"

"Where's the telephone?" he asked, to change the subject.

She pointed to a corner. He called up the Cameron house.

"That you, Mr. Cameron? I am about to fulfill my promise. I've got Doris. We'll be with you as soon as a taxi can get us there!"

There was a gasp, a cry of "Mother!" but Richardson put the instrument up, and told Doris to get ready.

"I am going to take you home, and will give strict orders that you are not to leave the house, except in my company, until after we are married!" he declared.

She made no protest, and a few minutes later they were on their way to her old home.

Explanations had to be repeated, and additional details given before they separated for the night.

They got their license the next morning, were quietly married, and a notice was sent to Natalie, with a check from Richardson for a substantial amount to cover her disappointing wedding expenditures. Natalie received it grimly.

"I don't believe I could have managed him if I had married him," she sagely concluded. "But there are others."

She banked her check, and when her father inquired after his contribution to her *trousseau*, she told him that it was his place to provide her with one marriage outfit, and as she had enough to provide herself with a second one, he had nothing more to say.

She married a few months later, trying this time to select a mate whom she could control and bend to her wishes.

About a month after their marriage, Doris received a letter from Rabanath, addressed to Mrs. Kennard, at her New York apartment address:

"DEAR LADY: I have ill news to report. The vessel we sailed in was torpedoed not far from Holland. As the submarine submerged immediately, we were unable to declare ourselves, and had to take to open boats with the rest. In some way, Gustave and I were separated. The boat I was in was picked up, the one he was in neither made port nor was ever seen again. I can only offer you the vague consolation that he died for his country, as I am expecting to die for mine. I may never see you again; you may never even hear from me again, but I know you will never forget either of us, or our efforts to serve our native lands. I salute you. RABANATH."

You will be intensely interested in the detective story entitled "The Glass Witness," to appear in the next number of this magazine.

TAKE NOTICE!

The feature stories that have been published in this magazine are well worth reading, if you have not already seen them. The list is as follows:

No.
1 THE EEL MAN, by Robert Carlton Brown
2 ZITANA OF MAISON ROUGE, by F. W. Doughty
3 THE MYSTERIOUS WEB, by Armstrong Perry
4 UNDER THE HYPNOTIC SPELL, by Dr. H. Enton
5 THE SILKEN SHEATH, by Crittenden Marriott
6 A FORTUNE TELLER'S SECRET, by Gladys Hall
7 THE MYSTIC EMBLEM, by Marie Coolidge Rask
8 THE CARDS OF FATE, by William Goode
9 MR. BACHELLER'S APARTMENTS, By William Hamilton Osborne
10 THE INNER WHEEL, by Octavius Roy Cohen
11 THE VOICE OF THE VALLEY, by Robt. C. Brown
12 THE SIGN OF THE SEVEN SHARKS, By Charles F. Oursler
13 UNDER A MASK, by Critenden Marriott
14 CASE 4,444, by Gladys Hall
15 AFTER A MILLION, by Police Captain Howard
16 SHADOWING THE BLUE TRIANGLE, By Charles F. Oursler
17 THE CASE OF CAPTAIN FORTESQUE, by R. Ingalls
18 THE BIRD-HEADED SPHINX, by Edith S. Tupper

No.
19 A DOUBLE MYSTERY, by Dr. Harry Enton
20 THE MAGICIAN DETECTIVE, by C. F. Oursler
21 KING COBRA MYSTERY, by George Gilbert
22 THE HAUNTED CORRIDORS, by Wm. H. Osborne
23 NO MAN'S MAN, by Maxwell Smith
24 THE TREVOR PUZZLE, by T. C. Harbaugh.
25 THE TRAIL OF ROSES, by Edmund Condon.
26 THE HINDOO VANISHING CLUE, By Pauline Carrington Bouve
27 WHO WAS GUILTY? by Beulah Poynter
28 THE EVIL EYE, by Chas. F. Oursler
29 THE THIRTEENTH DOOR, by Edith Sessions Tupper
30 THE GAME OF DETECTIVE CAREW, By Leonard Jerome
31 LAW-MAKER AND LAW-BREAKER, By Beulah Poynter
32 THE COUNTERFEIT HEIRESS, By Inspector John Harrigan
33 TRACKED TO CHINA, by Chief Roger O'Brien

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THE TWO WIDOWS

By A SCOTLAND YARD DETECTIVE

THE quiet enjoyment with my wife and children on Christmas Day in London was broken in upon by Inspector Thomas, with a message from Colonel Rowan, the then chief commissioner. It required me to first make myself thoroughly master of the papers sent to me by Thomas, and that done, forthwith place myself in confidential communication with two ladies—one, a Mrs. Hughes, whom I should find at the Clarendon, Bond street; the other, Mrs. Lister, who was staying at Osborne's Hotel, in the Adelphia. Mrs. Lister would see me at any time, but it was requisite that I should wait upon Mrs. Hughes before her dinner-hour, seven o'clock. Above all, I was to be scrupulously careful that neither of the ladies should for a moment suspect that I was in correspondence with the other.

"It's a tangled skein to unravel," remarked Thomas, after delivering the commissioner's message. "There are, it seems, two widows of one gentleman, one son of both, and lots of 'kale' depending upon the result."

"Two widows of one gentleman; one son of two widows! You are jesting, of course."

"Not a bit of it. There are two sets of lawyers, too, in the case. Here are their names and addresses: Smith & Smith, of Gray's Inn, Mrs. Hughes' attorneys; and Messrs. Jones & Son, of Bedford Row, who are acting for Mrs. Lister. And mind, you must be careful," continued the inspector, "to keep Jones & Son in the dark as to your being in consultation with Smith & Smith, and *vice versa*, as you will be with respect to the widows. You'll find, I fancy," Thomas went on to say, "that you are expected to be a sort of second Solomon; with this difference, however, that instead of ordering the boy, when you've got him, to be divided between the two mothers, you, after arriving at a settled conviction upon the case, are at once to go in, back and edge, against the party in the wrong, in conjunction, naturally, with the right party's attorneys. You must, however, the commissioner insists, be dead sure of your game before showing your hand to the lawyers."

Thomas, who seemed to enjoy, in a mild way, the vexation which his errand at such a time caused me, added the compliments of the season, and left me to the enjoyment of the bundle of papers he had placed before me. Indulgence in ill-temper would avail nothing; so, resolutely buckling to at the task assigned me, I had, by nine in the evening, fully possessed myself of the details of the affair as set forth in the papers, and by the *viva voce* additions and corrections supplied by the two widows, whom I duly visited at their temporary abodes.

In order to render the perplexing maze of circumstances, conjecture, and suspicion at all plain to the reader, I must begin at the beginning of the complicated involvement—about ten years, that is to say, previous to the Christmas Day when the agency of the detective police was simultaneously invoked by both parties.

Sir William Hughes was a rich north-country manufacturer, who had been knighted, and who, soon after that, took up his abode at Stone Hall, in the hunting county of Leicester. The old families fought shy, as might have been expected, of the "cotton-fellow," notwithstanding the costliness of his establishment. To overcome that repugnance, Sir William set up as a sportsman; purchased a rare pack of hounds, and spared no outlay or pains to afford sport to his aristocratic neighbors. His own appearance and exploits in the field seemed to have been decidedly successful in that particular, and the end was, that having one day ventured upon the back of a high-spirited hunter, which cost him the trifle of two hundred guineas, he was pitched with great violence over the high-spirited animal's head upon his own. This was the last of his fields, and though, after lying for several weeks between life and death, he recovered his physical health, his mind remained permanently affected; but not to such a degree as to convince a jury, summoned under a writ of *de lunatico*, issued at the instance of his only son, that he, Sir William Hughes, was incapable of managing his own affairs.

Sir William had been long a widower, and this, his only surviving son, Edmund, had been sowing a seemingly interminable crop of "wild oats" in Paris and London for about the same length of time; and not yet thirty, had already reaped the harvest of such husbandry—broken health, weariness of spirit, and no end of debts. His attempt to obtain a judicial declaration of his father's insanity, deeply offended Sir William, and it was many months before the afflicted gentleman could bear the briefest chance-sight of his son, without peril to his own life, from the excitement of rage.

Under such circumstances it was natural that Sir William, influenced, it might be, by a consciousness of deeper-seated mental infirmy than the commission *de lunatico* had been able to detect, should have been anxious to secure the kindly services and society of Mrs. Warner, a distant relative, then residing at a sea-port in the West of England. This lady was a widow, her age the shady side of fifty, and her circumstances by no means over-prosperous. Marriage, of course, was out of the question; and after a brief negotiation, Mrs. Warner and Caroline Sherwood, her orphan niece, took up their abode at Stone Hall, housekeepers, nurses and companions to the aged, fast-failing knight.

This arrangement, which worked very well, was suddenly thrown out of gear by the death of Mrs. Warner, about four months only after her domiciliation in Leicestershire. Those four months had, however, enabled Caroline Sherwood to obtain a lasting hold upon Sir William's regard, who looked upon and always spoke of her as his adopted daughter; and she, nothing loath, remained to minister to the old gentleman's needs, and direct his household.

Caroline Sherwood, when that onerous task devolved upon her, was in her twenty-first year, and remarkable both for intelligance and personal attractions. Her character, I judged, from the long conference I held with her, as Mrs. Lister, to have been a mingled yarn of good and evil, of excellences and defects. One main defect was an inordinate craving after riches; or more correctly, perhaps, the social distinction that usually accompanies wealth.

Notwithstanding the latent Plutonian passion, Caroline Sherwood had, some twelve months before she removed to Stone Hall, surrendered her heart and promised her hand to Charles Lister, second lieutenant of the *Blonde* frigate, whose only wordly wealth, actually and prospective, was his pay. The engagement had been strongly disapproved by Mrs. Warner, and during her aunt's life the correspondence of the lovers had been carried on by clandestine means. After that lady's death, Lieutenant Lister's letters were only directed to Stone Hall, Sir William having, by that time, become incapable of exercising the slightest supervision over Miss Sherwood's doings. He had no wish to do so. As his shaken intellect dwindled into utter childishness, his regard increased for the handsome young woman, whose sweet voice and soft hand were so gentle and caressing; and he was perpetually promising himself aloud to make her his sole heiress, to the exclusion of his son.

Now, Caroline Sherwood, as she herself told me in after days, did not for a moment suffer herself to be deluded into a belief that any will which Sir William could make in her favor would be worth the paper or parchment it was written upon. It is right to state this, because it seems to show her kindness to the sinking invalid was not prompted by selfish, unworthy motives. Very certain it is, however, that Miss Sherwood must have kept her opinion of Sir William's testamentary incapacity strictly to herself, and have been, moreover, especially careful not to give a hint to that effect to or in the hearing of the son and heir. An assurance of the kind would have been deemed invaluable by Edmund Hughes, who, though forbidden to present himself at Stone Hall, was kept pretty well *au courant* of his father's demonstrations and promises in favor of Miss Sherwood by the servants. These greatly disquieted him, fully believing, as he did, that Sir William could make a valid will. The verdict of the jury establishing Sir William's competency to manage his own affairs appeared to him conclusive on that point.

Deeply impressed with that conviction, Edmund Hughes deemed it a great stroke of policy to privately solicit Miss Sherwood in marriage. As her husband he would be safe, however matters turned out. She was a fine, clever girl, too, and he almost felt, and quite successfully feigned, a real passion for her. Aye, and the dazzled, facile fair one yielded to his suit, and became, by a strictly private marriage, Mrs. Edmund Hughes.

No question that Caroline Sherwood ought to have indignantly spurned the overtures of Edmund Hughes, and remained inflexibly faithful to Charles Lister. I am very far from disputing that; still, it is but fair to consider for a moment the exact position in which the young lady found herself at that turning-point in her life. A kind of coolness had of late arisen between her and Lieutenant Lister. Then the *Blonde* was about to be paid off. In those piping times of peace it was very doubtful whether the unbefriended lieutenant would again be employed in active service, and his half-pay, to support a lady-wife, and possibly a large family, would have been considerably less than two pounds per week. Such was the chilling prospect of her future which presented itself from one point of view. A glance in the opposite direction showed a husband, still a young man, of prepossessing exterior and address, whom she knew to be undoubted heir of more than eight thousand per annum in real estate, of Stone Hall and park, and a heap of personals; and who, moreover, professed unbounded admiration of her own sweet self. Positively, I am not sure that I have ever known one young damsel who, constrained by the like circumstances, would have decided differently from Caroline Sherwood. My acquaintance with the better sex is, however, a limited one.

The state of affairs which I have thus broadly sketched was not, of course, stated to me in so many words by Mrs. Lister; but the essential facts it was necessary to inform me of; and these told the story so plainly, that "We were married privately at Leicester," seemed to be that story's quite natural sequel.

The marriage was scarcely a month old when a paralytic fit extinguished all of mental or physical vitality remaining to Sir William Hughes, and the fourth day from the attack he was a corpse. No will, valid or invalid, had been executed, and Edmund Hughes succeeded, by unquestionable right, to his father's large possessions. There had been no necessity, then, that he should hamper himself with a wife. He had been the merest idiot to do so; and his folly was the more exasperating, inasmuch as the honey-mouth sufficed to convince him that he had felt no real, or at least no abiding love for the pretty beggar whom he, in an evil hour, had made the partner of his splendid fortunes. Mr. Hughes did not make any speech of this kind to his wife.

Another week had scarcely passed, when her impression as to the cause of the contemptuous coldness exhibited by her husband in his constrained intercourse with, and the morbid irritation he displayed towards her, underwent important modifications.

Mrs. Hughes entered the library one morning, not knowing her husband was there. He had just received his letters. Upon seeing her, he manifested extreme confusion; and as he crumpled up his letters and thrust them into his writing-desk, which he immediately locked, angrily demanded why she had sought him there. The astonished wife replied she did not know he was there; then left the room.

What meant that sudden confusion—that crumpling up of letters, and hastily placing them under lock and key? The letters Mrs. Hughes had noticed upon a table in the hall, and she, in looking to see if any were for her, had observed that two, sealed with black, were directed in an elegant female hand—by one female hand, though the letters had arrived by the same post. A glance at the post-marks showed they had been forwarded on two successive days—a frequent occurrence in the cross-post deliveries at Stone Hall. Doubtless they were letters from some distant female relative; the first sent, a missive of condolence; the other, a solicitation, possibly, of some kind of gift. So concluded the young wife, as she observed the letters. But that reasoning would not hold good after the scene in the library. Her newer surmise was that they were missives from a favorite mistress, dispatched with peremptory impatience to the new owner of Stone Hall.

A wife need not have an extravagant regard for her husband to be violently jealous of him. Indignant resentment of marital infidelity is as fiercely excited, I have noticed, by outraged self-love as by wounded affection. At all events, Mrs. Hughes, who never affected any violent passion for her husband, determined to satisfy herself, at any hazard, by any expedient, as to the mystery of those hurriedly-hidden letters. Mr. Hughes would soon take his morning ride; she knew where the key of his *escritoire* was kept; and should she, the key being concealed, have to break open the desk, she would, whatever the consequence, know who the woman correspondent of her husband was.

The wife's purpose proved easy enough of fulfillment; her husband was gone; had left the key of his desk in the usual place. She held the letters in her hand, read

t'em, and drank poison as she read. They were from Hughes' wife, and in somewhat querulous tones, insisted that he should, being now his own master, come at once to London for the purpose of conducting her and their child to Stone Hall. The second letter was to the same tune, with the addition that little Emily was in delicate health, which a speedy removal to the country, a physician had declared, could alone invigorate. Both letters were subscribed, Your affectionate wife, Emily Hughes."

The strong will of Caroline Sherwood, as we must now again call the unhappy young woman, enabled her to go through the terrible letters, sentence by sentence, word by word, till their genuine, truthful character was impressed upon her mind; then hope and strength alike forsook her, and she fell down in a faint with such heaviness that the noise was heard by the servants, by whose efforts she was restored to consciousness and despair. The letters were still tightly clutched in her grasp; and the moment she had fully realized the position into which she had been entrapped by Hughes' villainy, she resolved to invoke the vengeance of the law upon his guilty head.

She had not had time to leave Stone Hall when Hughes returned. A terrible scene ensued, which, nevertheless, ended in her sullen acquiescence in his advice to sleep upon the matter before committing herself to a step. Whatever the consequences as regard himself, it would irretrievably compromise her in the eyes of the world, and condemn her to a life of hopeless poverty.

The substance of the man's specious harangue may be briefly given. He had married a young lady about two years previously, by whom he had one child, a girl; but where—the all-important point in a legal point of view—that marriage was solemnized, he would defy Miss Sherwood and all the lawyers to discover. The first wife had married him for himself alone, not because she knew him to be the undoubted heir of a vast property. Upon the slightest hint that he was in jeopardy for an act committed under the pressure of an apprehension of beggary, she would vanish from the scene, if only for their child's sake. The letters were simply dated from London; a wide place to seek a Mrs. Hughes in. All that Miss Sherwood had really ascertained by her violation of his private correspondence was, that she was certainly not his wife. Thus, it would happen that, incapable of obtaining legal proof of the first marriage, she would be unable to successfully prosecute him; still less could she consent to live with him as his pretended wife. The upshot, then, of the very unpleasant affair must infallibly be, that Miss Sherwood would herself incur the pains and penalties of the exposure, without being able to inflict the slightest injury upon him. He should, when the hubbub subsided, live in splendor abroad with his true wife, whilst Miss Sherwood would have been deprived of an honorable alliance or settlement by her own senseless outcry.

It must be admitted that there was a good deal of brazen ingenuity in the specious scoundrel's way of putting the case, and one cannot feel astonished that Miss Sherwood, distracted by terror and surprise, left him with the tacit understanding that she would pause before invoking the law to avenge the cruel wrong it had no power to redress.

Night, in contradiction to the proverb, brought no counsel to the frenzied young lady. Fiery indignation still spurred her on, pale-hearted fear still held her back from attempting to wreak vengeance upon the wrongdoer, when a letter, directed to Miss Sherwood, was brought to her. It was from her old and still-devoted lover, Charles Lister. He wrote to appoint an immediate interview at Leicester, adding that a most unexpected legacy enabled him to offer her a comfortable home.

Miss Sherwood's resolution would appear to have been at once taken. She would see Lister, reveal to him all that had passed, and be guided implicitly by his advice. Whilst hastily preparing to depart, a note was brought to her from Mr. Hughes. It contained an offer, very guardedly expressed, of making Miss Sherwood a present of ten thousand pounds, which sum would at any time, after a lapse of a month, be payable to her order. Mr. Hughes was himself waiting below, just within the door of the library, as Miss Sherwood swept by, no doubt with the hope of ascertaining if his large money-offer had mollified her rage, but she passed him without a word.

In her long explanatory interview with me, Mrs. Lister passed rapidly, and with a heightened color, over her meeting with Lister. The memories it recalled were too painful. Besides, the papers confided to my discretion sufficiently supplied every essential fact and inference.

Lieutenant Lister, though much shocked and very savage at first, gradually calmed down; solemnly declared that his beloved Caroline, being entirely innocent in intent, of stainless moral purity as ever, he would still joyfully take her to wife. Miss Sherwood, after long hesitation, consented. It was mutually agreed to avoid, in the future, any mention of even Hughes' name; and shortly afterwards, Charles Lister, bachelor, and Caroline Sherwood, spinster, were united in the holy bonds of matrimony.

Whether Lister was disinterestedly sincere at the time of his marriage it is impossible for me to affirm or deny. A strong suspicion is, however, cast upon the purity of his apparent Quixotism by the undoubted fact that Caroline Sherwood did, at that first interview, incidentally mention the offer of ten thousand pounds hush-money by Mr. Hughes; and that she was empowered to draw for that magnificent sum, after a short interval, at pleasure. Still it may be that the notion of making a market of Mr. Hughes did not occur to Lister till after the birth of a son, between seven and eight months after the marriage, by which time, through imprudent shipping speculations, he had fallen into pecuniary embarrassment. Certain it is that the lieutenant and his wife lived most unhappily together after but a few months of wedded cohabitation. He became intemperate in his habits, and personally brutal towards her. The hush-money which he compelled her to draw upon Hughes for was confiscated to further and uphold fresh speculations; and when, after a few years, that was compromised, he worked upon the bigamist's morbid dread of exposure to fleece him to a large extent. Lister had by some means obtained legal proof of the marriage between Emily Kerton and Edmund Hughes, armed with which weapon he left the nervous master of Stone Hall no rest or respite from extortion. He also insisted that young Edmund Hughes Lister should accompany him on his latter predatory visit to Stone Hall. A prime result of that seeming caprice was that Mr. Hughes became strongly attached to the handsome boy, in reality, though not in law, as matters stood, his own son.

Whatever castles in the air the lieutenant might have built upon the basis of those demonstrations of natural affection, he did not live to see the fruition or frustration of his views. He died at Gloucester, where he had resided, a few months before Hughes was called to his account—of brain-fever, Mrs. Lister reported; the more exact designation would probably have been *delirium tremens*.

Thanks to Lister's persevering pulls at the purse of

Hughes, his affairs wound up much more prosperous than had been anticipated. Mrs. Lister found herself in the possession of a sufficient sun to purchase a comfortable life-annuity for herself, with remainder to her son.

Edmund Hughes, of Stone Hall, did not long survive Charles Lister, ex-lieutenant of the *Blonde*. Reckless spendthrift of health, as of less precious blessings, he had wasted in the heyday of life the sources of a vigorous maturity, dying an old man at less than forty. The final warning came so suddenly that the lawyer, summoned in hot haste, and cautioned by the physician in attendance that not one moment should be lost, had only time to pen a will of some twenty lines, by which the dying man bequeathed to my "beloved wife" the whole of his real and personal estate; constituted her his sole executrix, and guardian of "my children," to whom he doubted not she would be both kind and just. Probate was decreed upon this will, and Mrs. Hughes became one of the richest widows in Leicestershire.

The word "children," inserted in the will at the testator's express dictation, referred, of course, to his daughter and Edmund Hughes Lister. As, however, the mother's natural right could not be superseded by the appointment of Mrs. Hughes to be his guardian, a friendly arrangement took place between the two widows, the substantial covenants of which were, that three hundred pounds per annum should be paid Mrs. Lister for his maintenance and education, and that on the day he became of age the sum of five thousand pounds should be paid over to his use.

So far, the affair, though sufficiently complicated, was intelligible; but now came a phase therein at the interpretation of which I could only make the wildest guesses.

Mrs. Hughes, accompanied by her daughter, mother, and father-in-law, Captain Burt, paid Paris a visit about six months after the death of Mr. Hughes, and did not return to England—at all events, not to Stone Hall—till after an absence of eight weeks. A fortnight after their arrival, Captain Burt went to Gloucester, and informed Mrs. Lister that his daughter, being anxious to more effectually carry out her husband's dying wishes with respect to the boy, Edmund, proposed that he should be forthwith domiciled at Stone Hall. He was to be educated and regarded as befitted his recognized co-heirship with Emily Hughes. Mrs. Lister, after taking time to consider the proposal, declined it; influenced, she told me, by a vague presentiment of peril to her boy, should she agree to what, upon the face of it, was an unaccountably munificent offer. Captain Burt, finding he could not shake her resolve, took leave with the outrageously absurd threat of an appeal to the Court of Chancery, with a view to transfer the custody of the boy to Mrs. Hughes, there being no equitable doubt of his true paternity.

The boy at the time of Captain Burt's abortive visit to Mrs. Lister was at school in a large establishment in the neighborhood of Bristol. Ten days afterwards a well-dressed man called there with a note, purporting to have been written at the instance of Mrs. Lister, who, it was stated, was dying, and anxious that her son should be sent to her immediately in the care of the bearer of the note. No suspicion of foul-play being entertained, the boy was dispatched in charge of the gentleman, who traveled post. It was several weeks before the audacious abduction was discovered. The grief and distraction of the mother may be imagined. Her fixed conviction was, that her son had been carried off at the instigation of Mrs. Hughes, in order to compel her to consent to the strange proposal of which Captain Burt had been the bearer. The Hughes family, on the other hand, indignantly asserted that Mrs. Lister herself had caused her son to be secretly spirited away, partly for the purpose of annoying Mrs. Hughes, but principally in order to extort from that lady a heavy sum, as payment for the privilege of carrying out the dying wishes of her deceased husband.

Meanwhile, anxious search was made for the missing boy by the Hughes family, with suspicious ostentation. Advertisements offering large rewards for his recovery or tidings of him were inserted in the principal papers, but utterly without avail. The stranger, who had given the name of Marsden to the principal of the Bristol school, seemed to have vanished with his prey from off the face of the earth after leaving Swindon, at which place the carriage had been hired.

I have now brought the narrative down to the time when I, in pursuance of the commissioner's orders, waited upon Mrs. Hughes at the Clarendon, and on Mrs. Lister at Osborne's Hotel.

I shall dismiss these interviews very briefly. Mrs. Lister's sincerity of grief was painfully real. The accusation of the Hughes family, that she was privy to the disappearance of her son was, I could not for a moment doubt, an unmitigated calumny. The conversation with Mrs. Hughes and her relative, Captain Burt, left an impression on my mind that though the lady might not be personally implicated in the abduction of young Lister, there was some mystery or dread in connection with that occurrence which greatly agitated and alarmed her.

On coolly reviewing the affair on the following day, I could not for the life of me discover any means of setting about the task I was expected to successfully carry out. The only scrap of valuable information afforded was that the fellow who carried off the boy "was a tall, well-set-up, military-looking man, with a prominent nose, a hare-lip, and white, bloodless face." That was something, to be sure; much, if one could find out that he was an acquaintance of Captain Burt. It was in that direction I instinctively felt the only chance lay. "Well-set-up military-looking man!" I would call at the Clarendon forthwith, and take stock of the grim Captain more minutely than on the previous evening.

The family had left for Leicestershire; whither after much cogitation, and a conference with the commissioner, I determined to follow.

The village was, I knew, about three miles distant from Stone Hall, and upon arriving there, I, as good fortune would have it, obtained the use of a furnished bed-room at a general grocery-shop, kept by a widow, who was also the post-mistress.

The family at Stone Hall, and notably Captain Burt, were not, I found, in good odor with the post-mistress or the village-folk generally. I found no difficulty in inducing the widow to permit me to inspect the addresses of the letters brought by a servant from Stone Hall, and the post-marks of those which were addressed to the inmates of that residence.

Three days had passed when a foreign-post letter arrived, addressed in an English hand to Captain Burt, the post-mark of which I, with some difficulty, made out to be Chateaurox, France, a town south of Paris. I had not to wait long for the captain's reply. It came the next day: "Lieut. James, Chateauroux, France: *Poste Restante*."

I reached Chateauroux before the letter, and having, of course, provided myself with proper credentials, placed myself at once in communication with a *commissaire de police*. The arrangement I suggested was that I myself should remain *perdu* within the postoffice during the hours of delivery; and if a gentleman answering the description of the individual who carried off the boy from Bristol

called for the letter I could sally forth, whilst the postmaster held him in parley, seize and hand the culprit over to the French authorities. This, I was told, could not be allowed. All that the French police in such a case could permit was that Lieutenant James should be followed to his domicile, and if his explanation of the suspicions attaching to him were not deemed satisfactory, he would then be required to appear the next day before a magistrate, who would do what justice required.

"It is an affair between foreigners, and therefore quite exceptional," remarked the very civil, and even more snuffy *commissaire*, in reply to a movement of irritation which I could not repress. "But *soyez tranquille;* our system of passports, so admirably organized, will enable us to lay our hands upon M. James at any time, should he for a moment slip through our fingers."

Well, lieutenant of the bloodless face, hare-lip, etc., rode up the very next day to the postoffice on horseback, asked for the letter, and so clumsily was the whole affair managed, received it, and was again in the saddle before I could get into the street. I was so angry and excited, seeing he was about to ride off, that I stupidly cried out in English, too, to some gendarmes, who happened to be coming towards us, "Stop him! Stop that scoundrel!" The officers started, so did Lieutenant James, and instantly suspecting something of the truth, put spurs to his horse, and was out of sight in no time.

I must do my friend, the French commissary of police, the justice to admit that he discovered, that very day, that a Lieutenant James had been residing for a considerable time at a farmer's house situated about three leagues from Chateauroux; and that said Lieutenant James, who had borrowed the farmer's mare the previous day, had returned at a break-neck pace, paid his bill, packed his *portmanteau,* and departed without delay for Paris. Clever detectives we were, certainly! I was half-mad with vexation.

To Paris in search of a man with a hare-lip, etc. A charming hunt that, which, though aided by the Paris police, I, after four days and nights of exasperating and almost unremitting labor, finally abandoned.

I retired to my lodgings late in the afternoon, utterly knocked out in body, and soured in spirit. Of course I ate little, but of wine I consumed a bottle; at least I was charged with one. Whilst sipping it, my thoughts still ran upon the incidents, the complications, and vexations of the business in which I was engaged. Those thoughts slid, as it were, into dreams; a sleep from which I awoke with a start. I retired to bed, still continuing to think and dream, the ideas or notions becoming gradually more distinct, intelligent, coherent. Finally I awoke, and believed I had dreamed that Edmund Hughes, during the many years he had resided in Paris, had married a French lady, who was still alive, and that, consequently, neither the lady calling herself Mrs. Hughes, nor Mrs. Lister, was the true widow of the deceased owner of Stone Hall. Captain Burt and his daughter-in-law must, during their visit to Paris, have discovered the truth, and though I could not but admit the inference to be a very lame one indeed, had carried off young Lister in order to compel his mother to make common cause with them in resisting the claims of the rightful widow, and, in all likelihood, of the living heirs. I now believe that such an interpretation of the *imbroglio* must have suggested itself to my waking imagination, which had been so long striving to work out the confounding contradictions, improbabilities, possibilities of the case to an intelligent issue.

Nonsense or sense, folly or fact, I would at all events search the archives of the British Embassy, where alone I had understood such a marriage could have been legally solemnized. Leave to do so was granted, as a matter of course, upon payment of a heavy fee, and less than a quarter of an hour's search was rewarded by the discovery of the record of the espousals of Edmund Hughes, son of Sir William Hughes, Knight of Stone Hall, Leicestershire, England, with Julie Adrienne Delville, daughter of Hubert and Julie Delville, of Versailles, France. The date was nearly eighteen months previous to Edmund Hughes' marriage with Emily Kerton, of St. Andrew's, Holborn. It was first discovered to have taken place there by Lieutenant Lister, and afterwards was verified by Messrs. Jones & Son, of Bedford Row, who had at one time entertained strong doubts as to whether the alleged marriage with Emily Kerton might not have been a device on the part of Hughes to rid himself of a partner, for whom he had conceived a strong aversion.

I at once hurried off to Versailles to ascertain if the French wife was dead. M. Delville, who was well known and highly respected there, frankly answered my question. Their daughter, only child, and wife of that *scelerat* Hughes, had died, I found, without issue, very nearly six months after the marriage at St. Andrew's, Holborn, and eighteen months, consequently, or thereabouts, before Edmund Hughes privately espoused Caroline Sherwood, who was, therefore, incontestably, the wife to whom, by the atrocious bigamist's will, all his estates, real and personal, had been devised. M. Delville added that several months previously an English military gentleman had called, and asked similar questions.

There could be no doubt now as to the motives which had prompted the carrying off of young Lister, otherwise Hughes. Should his father's will be set aside for ambiguity, he was the undoubted heir-at-law; and the audacious project had been concocted of wringing, at a fitting season, from the mother's love for her son, a compromise that would save Captain Burt, Emily Kerton, and her daughter from beggary. The proposal, certain to be rejected, made to Mrs. Lister at Gloucester, was, no doubt, a mere pretense, to be afterwards appealed to as a proof of Mrs. Hughes' tender regard for the boy, and the impossibility, therefore, that she, of all persons, could have entertained the idea of kidnapping him.

Their nefarious tricks would be utterly defeated now, I exulted to think, as I, with all possible speed, returned to England. A great error that on my part. In less than two hours after I reached London I was closeted with Jones, senior, attorney-at-law. The benign gentleman listened to my account of the important discoveries I had made, and received the documents I had brought from France, with a condescending, patronizing smile, and bushy eyebrows complacently raised in compliment to "my really very creditable exertions in the case, which, at the fitting time should, I might entirely depend, be handsomely recompensed." He then civilly showed me out of the office.

What afterwards occurred *in re* Hughes and Hughes I know nothing positively, except from contradictory newspaper reports. Mrs. Lister was recognized to be the rightful Mrs. Hughes, and her son, who had been adroitly smuggled off to France, was restored to her, upon conditions; namely, that one thousand per annum should be secured to Emily Kerton, with succession to her daughter—which was, perhaps, just enough—also that Captain Burt's share in the abduction from the school near Bristol be quietly ignored. These were, I believe, the main points of the compromise arranged by Messrs. Jones & Son and Messrs. Smith & Smith.

THE GREEN GOODS MAN

BY BARNEY BLY

"THERE it is, sir. One of the cleverest counterfeits I ever saw. Even the paper bears the stamp of genuine money. Did you ever see a better one?"

Sylvester Holcombe, cashier of the Northville Bank, was the speaker, and he held what appeared to be a genuine bank-note in his hand. His companion was a tall, fine-looking man, with English side-whiskers, and, though few people would have guessed it, he was one of the keenest detectives in America.

"I recognize the work," said Sidney Bent, the detective, quietly. "It is that of Duncan Foss, the cleverest engraver in the business."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Holcombe eagerly. "You feel sure of that, do you?"

"I do."

"But where is he now?"

"That is a question not easily answered," replied Bent with a smile. "Foss is slippery and takes long jumps. He may be in 'Frisco by this time."

"Well," declared the cashier slowly, "there has been a lot of the green goods circulated in this region lately. We have stopped fully twenty of the bills, and the figures have varied in value from five to twenty dollars."

"Yes," agreed Bent. "He has no doubt unloaded a lot of the stuff about here. Keep your eyes open."

"I will," replied the cashier. "Then you will take his trail?"

"This very hour," declared the detective quietly. "Foss has baffled the best of us, but I feel that I shall succeed in cornering him. Keep quiet and apprise nobody of the fact that I am in this town."

"Very well, sir," agreed Mr. Holcombe.

Bent left the bank. Very soon he was upon the principal street of Northville.

He went about his case in a shrewd and systematic manner. He was not well acquainted in Northville, but long experience had taught him how to select the likely ones as agents of the green goods man.

A fortunate chance had enabled him to get a clue. When he alighted from the train that morning he had seen a taxi-driver giving in change a number of the spurious bills. It required only a glance for the detective to identify them.

The unfortunate receiver of the bills would be duped to the extent or four or five dollars. Ordinarily Bent would have denounced the spurious bills, but such an act would have been fatal to his plans. So he contented himself with simply marking the taxi-driver.

He was satisfied at once that the fellow was one of the green goods man's agents. It was now his cue to shadow this rascal in hope of locating the bigger one.

So Bent directed his footsteps to the railroad station. As luck had it, he found his man there.

The detective's mind was made up at once as to what course he should pursue.

He went directly up to the taxi-driver and said in a hurried way:

"Drive me to Prospect Road. That is two miles out, is it not?"

"Aye, sir," cried the taxi-driver readily. "I suppose you want to be dropped at the bridge?"

"Yes, that will do."

"Very well, sir."

"One moment."

"Yes, sir."

"What will your fare be?"

"Two dollars, please."

"All right. Make haste."

The detective leaped into the taxi and the door was shut with a slam. He was driven rapidly out of the town.

Bent had a purpose in this. He knew that Prospect Road was a lonely locality. In due course of time the taxi came to a halt not far from a bridge which spanned a small stream.

The driver descended and opened the door. Bent leaped out and tendered him a five-dollar bill.

The taxi-driver's hand went down into his pocket and he drew out three crisp, new one-dollar bills. The detective took them in change. There was no mistaking them and his hand suddenly came out of his hip-pocket to cover the astounded chauffeur with a revolver.

"Hands up!" he demanded sternly. "Those bills are counterfeit."

The chauffeur was livid in countenance and trembled like a leaf. However, he obeyed and held up his hands.

"Eh, what's that, sir?" he sputtered in terror. "I didn't know it, sir, I'll swear I didn't."

"Don't lie," said the detective sternly. "Give me your name."

"Dan Brickett."

"Well, Dan, where did you get those bills? There's no use in beating about the bush. I am onto you and you know all about it."

"About what, sir?" stammered the terror-struck chauffeur.

"I know that you are handling green goods. That means twenty years behind bars if I choose to haul you up. But I am after bigger game. If you want to save yourself tell me the truth."

"I will! I will!" cried the terrified man. "If you won't jug me for it. I'm a man of family, you know."

"Then you ought to be in better business," declared the detective. "Tell me where Duncan Foss is?"

Dan Brickett was now completely in the detective's hands. He broke down at once and Bent had no difficulty whatever in drawing the whole truth from him.

"You see, sir," confessed the chauffeur, "Foss gained my confidence and I bought a lot of the stuff of him. I can't tell you where he is now, but I can tell you where he will be to-morrow morning."

"Where?"

"At the Union Hotel. He will register under the name of Henry Montclair. I was to meet him there and get some more stuff."

"Are you telling me the truth?"

"On my honor, sir."

"Now, look here, Brickett. It won't pay you to lie to me. If Foss is not at the Union Hotel to-morrow morn-

ing, up you go. If he is, and if you will help me to jug him, I'll agree that your case will never get into court and you shall have a reward besides."

"Done!" cried Brickett excitedly. "I'm your man, boss. What do you want me to do?"

"Simply help me to bag my man."

Brickett was thoughtful a moment.

"I've got it!" he cried suddenly. "My brother is night porter at the Union Hotel. I'll get him to take my place in the taxi and I'll take his place. Then I can be on hand in the hotel to help you and let you know just when our man comes in."

"Good!" cried the detective triumphantly. "You've got the idea exactly, Dan. Drive to the Union Hotel at once."

The detective leaped into the taxi and Brickett sprang into the car. Back to the city he drove.

At t he hotel Bent registered and was assigned to a room.

At the usual hour that evening the night porter came, but instead of the regular incumbent it was his brother Dan.

Bent managed to see Dan and have a conversation with him.

"What time do you expect Foss to arrive?" he asked.

"Indeed, sir, I hardly know. Not before morning, I think."

"I will give you my reason for asking," said the detective. "For two days and nights I have not had a wink of sleep. I fear I cannot stand it longer. I think I will retire, and, as soon as Foss comes, will you come to my door? I will leave it open and you can awake me."

"Very well, sir," agreed Brickett. "I will do that for you."

Indeed it did seem to the exhausted detective that nature must surely succumb if he did not indulge at once in a few hours' sleep. Under other circumstances he would have remained awake and on the watch all night. But he had faith in Brickett, so he went to his room and retired.

He slept soundly for some time, but was suddenly awakened by a low, sibilant whistle.

In an instant he sat bolt upright in bed and there in the half-open door, with an uplifted candle in one hand and a water-pitcher in the other, was the night porter, Dan.

"Brickett!" exclaimed the detective, now thoroughly awake. "He has come?"

"He is at the desk, about to register, sir."

"What is the time?"

"A little after four, sir. He came on the early train. I brought you some water to wash with, sir."

The detective was out of bed in a twinkling and in an incredible short space of time had washed himself and dressed. All this while Brickett had been in the corridor on the watch.

A bellboy was coming up the stairs with the green goods man to show him to his room. The detective by this time was in the shadows of the corridor.

As the counterfeiter advanced Bent saw that he was a very slender, smooth-faced man, indeed, effeminate in physique.

When he had reached a point near the detective Bent stepped forth and placed a hand upon his shoulder.

"Duncan Foss, you are my prisoner! Make no resistance."

The effect was electrical. A sharp, stifling cry escaped the lips of the green goods man and a revolver flashed in his hand. It was all done in a twinkling

There was a shot.

Dan Brickett threw up his arms with a hoarse cry and fell. The detective's life was spared by a miracle. The bullet struck a steel match-box in his pocket, over his heart, and glanced off.

Bent threw himself upon the counterfeiter, but Foss writhed out of his grasp and fled down the stairs. The detective followed in pursuit, but the green goods man reached the street first.

A carriage was passing. Foss leaped into it and gave word to the driver, who whipped up his horses. Away they dashed and the detective ran.

But the horses, of course, distanced the detective, though he kept on up one street and through another for over an hour, vainly seeking for the carriage.

Just as the shops were opening in the early morning the detective turned a corner and saw the carriage he was in quest of just drawing up to the curbing.

In an instant he had spoken to an officer, who grasped the horses' bits. Then Bent sprang to the door.

He was confident that the person in the vehicle was his man. But to his amazement a very indignant and richly-dressed young lady sprang out.

"What is this?" she cried angrily.

Bent was completely taken aback. He bowed and stammered excuses, and then sprang upon the driver's box, exclaiming furiously:

"Come, where is the man you had in your carriage an hour since? Tell me the truth or I'll have you behind bars. I am a detective."

"I left him at the Red Bridge, sir," replied the driver, simulating fear. "Was it wrong, sir?"

"You know he was a crook," cried the detective angrily. "I have your number and you shall answer for this. Where did he go from the Red Bridge?"

"I don't know, sir."

The detective saw that there was nothing to be elicited from the driver, so he sprang down again. The young lady meanwhile had gone into a shop.

Bent, much discomfited and impressed that he had lost his game, was about to move away when a startling thing occurred.

A tremendous uproar was heard in the store opposite, and then he saw the young lady of the carriage come rushing out, with the storekeeper and two clerks in hot pursuit.

"Stop her! Stop her! She is the one!" cried the excited storekeeper.

The detective, astounded beyond measure, sprang forward. The richly-dressed young lady made for the carriage and there was cornered by the storekeeper.

"Police!" shouted the excited merchant. "Arrest her! She has passed counterfeit bills in my store. She is the one!"

Bent stood for a moment like one in a trance. All in that instant a startling suspicion overwhelmed him. Then he recovered himself.

"I will take charge of her!" he cried. "She is under arrest. I am a detective."

"Good!" exclaimed the storekeeper, drawing back. "I will appear against her."

Manacles were slipped upon the slender wrists of the young woman and as he did so the detective made a queer discovery. The sleeves of her dress were lined with thick cloth, and by quickly turning them up at the wrist the detective saw that the sack which she wore was a man's coat, cleverly arranged to turn inside out and serve a double purpose. Below the hem of the scant skirt he now saw the turned edge of a man's trousers. At once he penetrated the clever disguise.

"Duncan Foss!" he exclaimed in triumph.

Straight to the police station Bent and his bird were driven. Here the most startling surprise of all was accorded the detective. Any quantity of green goods was found upon the person of the prisoner. Then the whole mystery leaped out. The prisoner was not a man, after all, but in fact a woman. Duncan Foss was only the alias and personnel of the most clever woman counterfeiter ever known in America, whose real name was Mary Ford.

As she was now cornered, she broke down and confessed. Attired in the skilfully arranged suit, by which, in a few moments she could change her identity from male to female, she had practiced her profession all over the country and baffled the keenest detectives. It was only by the merest chance that Bent had at last brought her to justice.

The revelation created a genuine sensation, and sentence being imposed, the green goods man, or rather woman, afflicted the country no longer. But Dan Brickett to this day carries as a memento of the woman counterfeiter a bullet in his hip joint. Sidney Bent has tracked many a green goods agent since, but never one so keen and desperate as Mary Ford.

ORIGIN OF THE CURFEW BELL

SO many towns ring the curfew bell to warn the young folk that nine o'clock p. m. must find them at home, it is interesting to know that the curfew bell originated in England in the time of William the Conqueror. A "curfew" was a fire cover of metal, shaped like a hood, with a handle by which it was lifted. It had an opening on one side, and was about ten inches in height. Because fires in early days were made on larger open hearths, the smoke escaping through a rude chimney, or even through a hole in the roof, fire risk was great. It was ordered that every householder, before retiring, must cover his fire with a *couve-feu*, meaning "cover the fire." He scraped the embers together at the back of the hearth, putting the cover over them, the open part close against the chimney.

A bell was rung in the market-place at an early hour every night, as a signal that people must extinguish their fires and go to bed. The term "curfew" was associated with the ringing of the bell. But in William the Conqueror's time a curfew was nothing more poetical than a plain metal fire-extinguisher.

HINDU MAGIC EXPOSED

THE Indian rope trick is the sea-serpent of the plains, and like the mythical monster of the deep, varies in its form, appearances and disappearances. Much depends upon the mentality of the observer and the narrator, says Stuart Cumberland in the *London Daily Mail*. Things in this world seldom, if ever, occur exactly as related, and this applies with additional force to so-called occult phenomena, whether of Occidental or Oriental origin.

Having more or less exhausted my investigations of the supernatural marvels of the West, I decided to visit India for the purpose of investigating the country's alleged magical marvels.

I did not go as a mere "tripper," but as one with a special mission, which obtained me access to the principal native courts and enabled me to be brought in touch with magicians of the highest repute and with, as it were, the correct atmosphere associated with their magic.

Of the much-vaunted miracle of which, previous to my visit, I had heard so much, not a sign was vouchsafed me. It was the same everywhere I went—North, South, West and Central India. Of other specimens of magic, chiefly neither particularly new nor illuminating, there was no lack. But the gem of gems—the rope magic—eluded me.

Occasionally a wandering fakir would, while I was traveling through the country, add to the feats exhibited to a singularly uncritical audience by throwing up a rope in the air. But the proverbial boy, squatting complacently at the fakir's feet, never once climbed the rope, disappearing in the azure distance. On the contrary, according to my observation, he remained where he squatted, and the rope came down to earth again, just in the same way as it would have done if thrown by you or me.

Eventually I heard of a superman among magicians, attached to the Maharajah of Benares. I got myself placed in touch with his highness, and the wonder-worker was sent post-haste to me at Agra to show me all there was to be shown.

His feats included the mango trick, exceedingly well performed, but that elusive rope marvel was not on tap, which, from a much-vaunted superman in the occult art, was exceedingly disappointing. By the bye, nothing the fakir did during the days he was placed at my disposal could, by the greatest stretch of credulity, be ascribed to occult powers, although Sir Edwin Arnold, who was my guest, let his poetic and expansive imagination run somewhat loose over what he saw.

My investigations certainly tended to convince me that the rope trick was a myth of myths and probably had its origin in the highly-colored imagination of some gullible story-teller. As the myth grew, fringes were added, among them the hypnotic theory, which served to increase or explain the mystery—a mystery never based upon demonstrable proof.

The story associated with the rope trick of the mutilated boy and the subsequent reunion of the body is sheer nonsense, and what is more, the incident never even occurred as related. The "feat," as a matter of fact, is on a par with the Indian basket trick, in the performance of which a boy is placed in a basket, and duly dispatched by a sword passed through it, to reappear a few minutes later, alive and well, descending an adjacent tree.

On one occasion, to test my theory of the manner of the trick's performance, unseen by the fakir, I placed a private mark on the back of the boy before he was put into the basket. Then came the sword-thrust, the boy's squeal of agony, and the flow of blood on the ground. The basket, when uncorded and opened, showed that its occupant had disappeared. Then from the tree came the living boy. I examined his back; the mark was absent. He was just another boy; the original victim, with my mark upon him, remaining in the basket, which had a false bottom. The blood staining the earth came from a bladder filled with bullock's blood, which had been placed between the boy's legs, through which the sword had been guided.

I went to India, as I have said, to investigate and to annex, if possible, a *bona-fide* wonder-working fakir, astral form or other superman in the occult line, in order to convince an incredulous Occident of the mystic wonders of the East. And I came away disillusioned and empty-handed.

THE CLUE OF SILVER

BY A PRIVATE DETECTIVE.

CARTER had just left headquarters and was crossing a side street at the hour of eleven on one of the darkest nights he had ever seen, when a thrilling incident claimed his attention.

He had just finished a case of much importance and had gained the commendation of his chief, not a little fame and a liberal reward.

As a result he was in quite a cheer frame of mind. The street through which he was passing was an unfrequented thoroughfare in the rear of large warehouses. Suddenly in the dim light ahead he saw dark forms struggling, heard the scuffling sound of feet, and a thrilling, terror-stricken cry arose upon the night air:

"Help! help!"

Carter's whole being was aroused. He started down the street to the relief of the unknown in distress with the speed of the wind.

But it was all over in a twinkling. Before Sam could get anywhere near the spot the forms had disappeared, a carriage door slammed and the vehicle itself went off down the street at a mad pace.

"Something is wrong here," he muttered with conviction. "That affair covers up a crime of some sort."

Carter drew the slide of a dark-lantern and illumined the sidewalk. He gave a great start as he did so.

There was a pool of blood upon the flagging. He noted an object beside it, which he picked up.

The silver head of a cane, and it represented the claws of an eagle supporting a round silver ball. The staff was broken, about an inch of it remaining.

This was all the clue Carter found, yet he had reason to consider it valuable and placed it carefully in an inner pocket. Then he went to an alarm-box and rang up the nearest police headquarters.

When the sergeant and his men arrived the detective placed the facts in their hands and went on his way.

Carter had nigh forgotten the matter in his exciting round of duties. But one day he was passing along a business street in the heart of St. Louis, when his attention was claimed by a wan, white-faced young woman. Her beauty was great, but her whole appearance indicated great suffering of mind. The detective watched her narrowly.

He followed her down an unfrequented street, and the detective was accorded another thrill of surprise.

She was being followed by another—a tall, fashionably-dressed but evil-featured type of man. He overtook her rapidly, and his manner at once convinced the detective that he was pursuing an innocent girl. Carter set his teeth hard.

He managed to slip behind a tobacconist's sign just as the young man overtook her. He saw the rude grasp placed upon the frail shoulders, heard the faint, quivering cry and saw a light of terror in the young woman's eyes.

"So, Elsie Verner, this is what you have come to!" exclaimed the young man in a sneering manner. "Well, well! Where is the recreant lover?"

"Do you dare insult me, Luke?" she cried in a ringing voice. "I have all the woe and misery heaped upon me now which I can bear. You will drive me mad."

"That is a pity," sneered Walton. "How can I say that I am sorry for you, when you would marry that unprincipled pauper, Leslie Verner. Only think, I offered you my hand and fortune. Would you not have done well to accept?"

"I married the man of my choice," she replied calmly.

"Come now, Elsie, let us talk sense. It is a cold, hard world to battle through alone. I can love you a little now. Despite Verner I will give you a home——"

"Stop!" she cried with flashing eyes. "Better death than that. I would not accept a favor of the meanest sort from you. Despite my husband's conduct, despite the fact that he has cruelly abandoned me, you shall not villify him."

It was a dramatic situation. The detective was stirred to the very depths of his soul.

Even Walton was impressed with her demeanor and recoiled abashed. But only for an instant. Then a savage oath burst from his lips.

"By God," he hissed, "you have always defied me, Elsie!"

He sprang forward and clutched her arm. She screamed with terror, but the tall form of the detective intervened and he flashed his star in the fellow's face.

"Do you see that? It means prison bars or—get!"

Walton slunk away into the gloom and the detective bowed respectfully before the abandoned wife.

"I am at your service, madam," he said kindly. "It is my business to protect just such as you. I am a detective."

"You are kind," she said in a strange, constrained voice. "I fear that man greatly. But I will go my way now."

"Wait!"

She paused and the detective lowered his voice in a reassuring manner.

"I know that you need a friend. I will be that friend. I am a man of honor. I understand that your husband has deserted you."

"He—he left me for a reason I dare not explain," she replied brokenly.

"You must tell me your story and I will try to right your wrongs."

Her story was brief and simple. It was the hackneyed tale of love vows, a secret wedding to avoid the displeasure of a doting uncle on his way to the grave, whose fortune would become theirs. A brief, happy year of wedded bliss, the outcome being a baby boy, dear to both. Then the sudden disappearance of the husband, a cleverly written note of excuse that the dream was over and the end had come.

Carter listened with burning indignation.

"That is not half a man who will do such a thing," he cried contemptuously. Then, seeing the spasm of pain in the young wife's face, he said:

'Listen. I am going to bring your husband back to you. Go to your lodgings; stay with your baby boy. Wait there for my coming. In less than a week I will bring your recreant husband back."

Carter was deadly in earnest. He saw the injured wife safely home to her humble lodgings, where he left her in

a dazed condition, then he went straight to headquarters. It was his purpose to look up the Verner family and get on the track of the absconding husband.

But upon entering his office he found a tall, fine-looking old man, who walked with a crutch. He bowed pleasantly to the detective.

"My name is James Cameron," he said explainatively. "I want to secure your services in the search for my nephew, who has disappeared very mysteriously. I fear he has met with foul play."

"Mr. Cameron," began Sam decidedly, "it is impossible for me——"

"You must give me your time!"

The two men looked at each other; then the detective indicated a chair.

He listened attentively to the old man's account of his nephew's disappearance. When he had finished he asked:

"What is your nephew's name?"

"Leslie Verner!"

Sam could not have received a greater shock. For a moment he could not speak. A multitude of ideas flashed over him.

"What! If this doting old uncle knew the truth," he reflected as he gazed at the millionaire. "That his nephew has driven to ruin and misery an innocent young girl—but he must not know it."

Then aloud he said:

"Mr. Cameron, I am going to find your nephew. If you think foul play has——"

The detective paused. The old man had turned ghastly pale and pointed to an object which lay upon the table. It was the silver ball and eagle claw cane-head which Carter had retained as the only clue of a dark night's mystery.

"That is the head of my nephew's cane," he gasped.

The identification was complete and the detective was thrown entirely out of his reckoning. Here was a development which suddenly changed the aspect of the whole case.

When Mr. Cameron left the office Carter sat down to a desk and drew what he believed was a correct diagnosis of the case.

"Foul play from the start," he muttered. "That scuffle on the sidewalk which I saw that night was the murder or abduction of Leslie Verner. The finding of this cane-head proves that he was one of the parties. Now who did the thing, and what was the motive? I will wager two to one that Walton is at the bottom of it. He was a former suitor of the young wife. There is his motive—not only revenge, but to get her into his clutches."

It was not an hour later that the detective found Walton at his home in the fashionable part of St. Louis. The detective placed a warrant on the table with the cane-head, feigned knowledge of the whole affair, and, backing the man down, said:

"There is just one hope to save you from a life imprisonment, Luke Walton. If you will tell me where to find Leslie Verner alive I will give you six hours time to leave St. Louis scot free."

The last bit of bluffing on the man's part had failed. He found he was cornered, and, as most crooks do, backed down and made a clean breast of it all.

It seemed that Verner had been knocked on the head, reduced to insensibility and driven to the Dale City Lunatic Asylum, a crooked institution, where a little money bribed the proprietors to accept a bogus doctor's commitment. The detective started with a posse of men for Dale City.

The crooked asylum was raided and among the incarcerated victims was found Leslie Verner in a state of mind bordering upon insanity. Words cannot depict the young man's intensity of joy when the detective told him all and assured him that his wife was safe and well.

"Luke Walton was always my enemy," he said bitterly.

In company with the detective the young husband hastened back to St. Louis and to the humble lodging where the deserted wife had been.

Had been, for she was not there now. She had gone out with her child, the boarding mistress said, not a half hour before. Upon the table was a penciled note:

"To Whomever Finds This.—Have pity upon a despairing woman, driven to madness by sorrow and want and the scorn of an unpitying world. Though it may be called a crime to voluntarily end life, yet I can endure it no longer. Farewell, happiness, husband, life and all. I seek a grave beneath the waters of the great river. There look for my body. ELSIE VERNER."

The paper was tear-splashed, the lines scrawling, showing the state of the writer's mind. Young Verner, white-lipped, fell half-fainting, but the detective, whose nerve stood him in good stead, fled from the room.

Was it fate which guided his footsteps that night of gloom to the great bridge which crossed the Mississippi? Certain it was that he was none too soon, for he saw a slender form flitting before him, saw it deposit a precious burden in a niche and mount the stone parapet.

Below rolled the waters of the river. One instant that white form hovered before taking the dreadful plunge. The detective had no time to lose.

One quick leap forward and he clutched her dress. Then her form was in his arms and he leaped backward. There was a brief struggle and she laid white and motionless. Insensibility mercifully relieved the overwrought brain.

In a richly-draped chamber of a palatial residence in upper St. Louis, Elsie Verner lay with physicians of skill by her side. By her bedside knelt Leslie Verner, in a small crib near reposed the child.

James Cameron, the millionaire, who had now become cognizant of the particulars of the secret marriage, stood in the center of the room. There was a light in his eyes which had not shone there for many years.

"Gentlemen," he said earnestly to the physicians, "you must save her life at any cost. There is no price I will not pay if you succeed."

The frail patient's eyes opened at that moment, the lovely face was suffused with a light of heavenly joy.

"Leslie!" she said in ecstatic tones. "It was all a dream. Was it not?"

"Yes, my darling, and a fearful black dream, too," replied Verner.

An hour later Mr. Cameron and Leslie were in the library. The nephew came forward and took his uncle's hand.

"Uncle James," he said candidly, "I did wrong in making a secret marriage. But I feared your opposition, and loved her."

"My boy," said the old man, with a strange trembling in his voice, "even though my life is near its end, new vistas of happiness have been opened up to me. I can see the wisdom of it now. You both have my blessing. May you always be happy."

It is needless to say that Luke Walton never showed up in St. Louis afterward. As for Carter, the detective, he was rewarded in the shape of a liberal check from Mr. Cameron, though the consciousness of having righted a great wrong would have been ample reward to him.

STORIES OF GREAT DETECTIVES

BY A NEW YORK JOURNALIST

The writer has had occasion professionally to learn a great deal about the real detectives. He has talked with them, corresponded with them, heard the narrative of their lives and exploits, and enjoyed in reality all the interest and excitement connected with these men that is constantly presented in the fiction of the day.

For the benefit of the thousands of readers of "Mystery Magazine," we propose to relate some of our experiences, and give a rapid glance at the most noted men in the different cities of the United States. The number of professional detectives is now very large. They are employed in every branch of the United States Government; all the great cities have a trained force, and the private agencies are to be found in all the cities, with correspondents throughout the civilized world. Our "Stories of Great Detectives" give, perhaps, the first familiar relation ever attempted of the characteristics of the great detectives who have made the detection of crime a new science.

MAX F. SCHMITTBERGER

THE name of Detective Schmittberger has appeared in the New York papers in connection with more arrests than any man on the police force. "Who was Detective Schmittberger?" said a gentleman to us one day, as he looked over his newspaper. "If any important arrest took place he seems to be the man who did it."

We determined to have a chat with Schmittberger, and found him late one day at the Twenty-ninth Precinct Station-House, in West Thirtieth street. The famous Captain Williams was in command of this precinct.

Schmittberger was tall and good-looking at that time, and thirty-two years of age. He was born in Germany, but was brought to this country when about eight years old. He had an amiable face, and bright, observing eyes. He was a man of great penetration, great nerve, and quick in action. He could run like a deer. To tumble downstairs and jump over fences in the pursuit of a thief did not trouble him in the least.

"You have been on a good many important cases, haven't you?" asked the writer who called to interview him.

"Yes," he replied. "During five years I arrested seven hundred and seventy offenders, and of this number two hundred and seventy-five were for felonies, and convictions were secured."

We asked him to relate some incidents. He commenced to do so; but as it was likely to take some time, we suggested another meeting.

"To-night," he said, "will be a busy time for me going about the precinct. Come to my house to-morrow afternoon; then I'll show you my scrap-book and tell you everything."

It was so arranged, and we kept the appointment.

Having seen many police abodes in our duties as journalist, we felt some curiosity to see the home of this captor of murderers, burglars, highway-robbers, and other desperadoes.

We found the place a nice flat on the West Side. The parlor was well furnished and hung with pictures, etc. Among other things was a large frame containing complimentary resolutions passed by the Board of Police Commissioners, "For the good judgment and sagacity" displayed by Schmittberger in arresting several dangerous thieves. The board also passed a second set of resolutions, complimenting him for the arrest of a noted burglar.

The family had just returned from the country, and a hammock was strung across the parlor for the amusement of the children. Here two smart, playful and interesting boys were amusing themselves to their hearts' content. Another child was in the arms of a servant. As Schmittberger spread before us the records of the exploits in which he had often risked his life, we were additionally impressed with the truly domestic scene about us, showing that however much his duty might involve him in desperate scenes, his home was a place of serene and virtuous enjoyment.

His father—now dead—conducted a school in Newark, N. J. He spoke seven languages, and was a highly-esteemed man.

"How came you to be a policeman and detective?" we asked, when comfortably seated.

"Well," he replied, "I went to sea, and afterwards I was a clerk, and then became a confectioner by trade, but I always had a desire to go on the police force."

At twenty-one he was appointed a patrolman in the Twenty-ninth Precinct. Next he was detailed for detective duty, and then he was promoted to roundsman for the arrest of Joseph Weil, a desperate burglar.

"When I arrested Weil," said Schmittberger, "we both rolled down two flights of stairs. Then he fell down a well-hole, two stories more, but made for the street and over the fences. I was lame and injured, but I kept after him until I mastered and arrested him. He got fifteen years.

"And you your promotion?"

"Yes."

We saw the beautiful gold and jeweled badge, presented to Detective Schmittberger by the French citizens of the precinct for his efforts in the arrest of the murderers of Louis Hanier. He was active in the search of Chastine Cox, the murderer of Mrs. Hull in New York, and, with Captain Williams, brought the murderer to New York in chains.

"Here is an account of a severe encounter I had with a burglar," said the detective, picking out a written paper from the pile before us; "I wrote it out in full."

A house uptown was robbed several times, and Schmittberger posted himself in the cellar at night to catch the thief, if possible.

"Every night," read the detective, "I was admitted to the house, and repaired to my hiding-place in the cellar, behind a lot of old packing-boxes. For five nights I lay in the cellar all alone, a dark-lantern by my side—rats and mice my only companions—clutching my revolver at the slightest noise, which sometimes during the lonely night would reach my place of concealment."

We thought how different the pleasant home of the detective from this place of midnight duty in a cellar.

"On July 7th," the detective continued, "about half-past two in the morning, my expectations were at last to be realized. I heard somebody pulling and tugging at the chain which held the cellar grating. At last the chain was shaken from the hook on which it was fastened; the grating was uplifted, and a man sprang into the

cellar. He listened a few moments, and pulled the grating down after him.

"I was alone with a desperate man, and I knew that my life depended on my courage. He struck a couple of matches, but they seemed to be wet, and went out. He muttered to himself, and groped his way to the staircase leading upstairs. He had to pass my place of concealment. As he did so, I flashed the lantern in his face, and shouted:

"'Stop where you are or you are a dead man!'

"He knocked the lantern from my hand, which, unfortunately, went out. He grappled with me, and a fight ensued between life and death. He did not know who I was; he struck me three stinging blows in the face, and I hit at him with the revolver.

"I shouted for help, but no one seemed to hear me.

"I finally saw that I had to kill him or he me.

"I fired at random.

"The noise of the shot in the still summer night awakened the neighborhood.

"I heard footsteps on the cellar-stairs.

"Dr. Kingsley came, with a light in one hand and a revolver in the other, and then the burglar shouted:

"'Don't shoot—I give up!'

"We secured him, and Officer Thomas Hill, the man on post, coming in, we took him to the station-house.

"He was indicted for three burglaries in the first degree, but pleaded guilty to one, and was sentenced to five years in State prison. All the property, amounting in value to nine hundred dollars, was recovered."

We heard a great many other adventures of the same thrilling kind, but this was sufficient to show the pluck of the man.

He was a detective so keen, that he had, in the hurrying throngs of the streets, detected a spoon sticking out of a man's pocket, and following him up, found him literally stuffed with jewelry and valuables. He had followed a man, discovered a robbery and recovered the property, when the party robbed was just starting out to look for the thief. If he encountered a man running in a suspicious way, he was after him in a moment, and in this way sometimes made important captures.

He wore all kinds of disguises, and wore them well. Weather was nothing to him when he was in purs it of his game. You could soak him or freeze him and it was all the same.

He had deep and cunning ways of obtaining information, and when a crime was committed, it required a very short time for him to locate the individual.

If you saw the bright-faced, quick-stepping man going along the street, you would scarcely take him for a person who had been in such conflicts with desperate men. If you saw him merry and contented in his home, surrounded by his wife and children, you would be still less likely to think that in a few hours the same man was called by duty to scenes of blood and crime.

Do not fail to read the next chapter of this series. It is a graphic account of A. J. Stiles and some of his best work.

PEARLS OF HISTORY

THE pearl is the only gem needing not the hand of man to bring to full perfection, and history affords ample evidence of the intense fascination it has always exercised among the people of every age. It is the oldest object of personal adornment.

Indian mythology often speaks of the pearl, attributing its discovery to the god Vishnu, who is said to have caused it to be drawn from the ocean for his daughter, Pandala. The records of the Romans, Babylonians, Persians and Egyptians always make mention of it. There was the wife of the Emperor Caligula, who for an ordinary betrothal feast, decked herself with pearls to the value of $1,650,000, and Julius Cæsar presented Servilia, the mother of Brutus, with a specimen valued at $250,000.

Coming to more recent epochs, we find that Philip II, King of Spain, paid $200,000 for a single pearl, known as "Peregrina." Found in Panama, it was pear-shaped and weighed 134 carats. It was brought from India.

France, also, owns some exquisite examples. But the biggest pearl known is that which was once the property of the banker, Henry Philip Hope. Cylindrical in form, it is two inches long, four and a half inches in circumference at one end and three and a half inches at the other. It weighs 1,800 grains and is valued at $60,000.

It is known that the beauty of the natural pearl sometimes proves evanescent. To retain its shimmering splendor, it needs air and light. Acids can effect them and emanations from the skin can destroy the precious bloom.

TYPEWRITER FIRST INVENTION OF THREE MEN

THE first really practical typewriter was the invention of three residents of Milwaukee—C. L. Sholes, S. W. Soule and Carlos Glidden, and it was just fifty-three years ago that they commenced their labors on a machine which, when completed in 1867, had the merit of being able to write at fair speed. Christopher Latham Sholes, who is usually called "The Father of the Typewriter," although he shares that fame with his two co-workers, was born one hundred years ago, and was an editor as well as an inventor. Sholes and Soule conceived the idea of inventing a machine for serially numbering the pages of blank-books. In the machine-shop where they carried on their labors they made the acquaintance of Carlos Glidden, another Milwaukee inventor, who was then working on a mechanical spader, intended to take the place of the plow.

Glidden became interested in the numbering machine, and suggested that the same principles might be used in developing a writing machine. Sholes became interested in the idea, and the three men formed a partnership, and began work. Soule suggested pivoted types set in a circle, Sholes invented the letter-space device, and Glidden also contributed a number of valuable ideas which were incorporated in the first model, which wrote fairly well, and with moderate rapidity. Soule and Glidden soon abandoned the enterprise, however, and Sholes formed a partnership with James Densmore, of Meadville, Pa., who joined him in marketing the first machines

SOME SCRAPS OF PAPER

A Detective Serial

BY POLICE CAPTAIN HOWARD

CHAPTER ONE

A FRIGHTFUL DISCOVERY

A HEAVY fog hung over San Francisco. It was the hour of six o'clock in the morning of June 10th, when a man, walking leisurely along McAllister street, at the bend which turns into the road leading to Golden Gate Park, stopped before a house which was occupied by a widow and her child.

As the man walked along the path leading to the house he was lost in deep meditation and did not notice that he was being followed by a woman, who watched his movements, managing it so that she was far enough behind him to be hid by the fog, but not so far but that she could see what the man was doing.

One peculiarity about the fogs coming from the Pacific Ocean, which envelop San Francisco in the mornings and evenings of the summer, is that one walking in it can see some distance ahead if going in a westerly direction, while if going easterly it is impossible for one to see anything a few feet away.

It was thus that the woman could see the man, while if he had heard footsteps and had turned around it would have been impossible for him to see her.

There was an air of mystery about both the man and the woman. He was a tall, well-built person of about thirty years of age, with fine, intellectual features, dark hair and black eyes, while the woman was the entirely opposite, both in age and stature.

She was petite in form, about eighteen years of age, sandy complexioned, and had an air which was both fascinating and attractive; but in spite of this there was something about her actions which would throw a coldness over friendship.

The man reached the house and walked around it several times before he attempted to ascend the steps in front. He examined the grounds, made a note of how the house was situated, and more especially the windows on the first floor.

The residence of Mrs. Howland was the prettiest and most attractive house on the road leading to the Park, and people would stop before the door in their drives to admire the beautiful flowers and shrubs which grew in such abundance. The widow was a woman of about forty years of age, remarkably well preserved, and it was said that she was very wealthy.

She went very little into society, had few acquaintances, and lived almost in seclusion with her child. Nothing was known of her antecedents excepting that she had bought her house of a wealthy lawyer and had taken up her residence there afterward, devoting her time to the cultivation of her garden and the private education of her son and heir.

The man who had been examining the surroundings of the house so minutely now ascended the steps, and, as the front door was open, he walked in without ringing the bell. The woman who had been following the man, as soon as he had entered the house, disappeared among the shrubbery.

As soon as the man entered the hall he was met by a police sergeant, who said: "Mr. Foss, I suppose you have been sent to take charge of this case?"

The man was Hugh Foss, one of the best-known detectives on the Pacific Coast. He had become noted during the time that Joaquin, the bandit, had terrified the people of the coast, and for running this inhuman wretch to earth. He had received the praise and gratitude of the whole State of California. As the police sergeant spoke the detective looked at him for a few moments in an absent manner and thus answered:

"Sergeant, excuse me, but I was engaged in thinking. Yes, I have come to take charge of this case. I understood at headquarters that the widow was murdered about four o'clock, and that the crime was discovered by the patrolman who was passing, and who heard a pistol shot and came to see what was the matter, when on entering the residence he discovered the widow and her child just breathing their last."

"That is it," rejoined the sergeant. "We have not disturbed anything, and have kept every one out of the room until you arrived."

"Show me to the room," the detective ordered.

The room where the crime had been committed was on the first floor, on the south side of the house, and was directly opposite the library.

On the bed lay the child beside his mother, who had a bullet hole through her brain. The detective looked at them for a few moments and noted the position of the body of the woman and the child.

The sergeant left the room now for a few moments, and Hugh Foss commenced his examination. The whole affair was shrouded in mystery.

Foss discovered that a box had been placed under the rear window of the room, upon which the murderer had stood while he cut away the putty and removed the large pane of glass, and, through the aperture thus made, entered the room.

A trunk in a corner of the room had been opened and the contents were strewn about the floor. By the side of the bed was a pistol, with the widow's name on it, one barrel being discharged. The widow had always kept her pistol on the mantel-piece.

The detective searched the room for some minutes longer, and then, not being able to find anything, he called the sergeant to him and said: "Don't allow any one to enter this room or disturb anything until I get back. I am going out to examine the grounds."

"All right, sir. Your commands will be carried out to the letter."

The detective went out and walked around the house to where the window was situated.

"This is the most mysterious case I have ever taken hold of," Foss muttered as he walked along the path,

"not the least clue to be found any place. The pistol belonged to Mrs. Howland. It is puzzling. If the bullet is extracted it will tell nothing. Whoever committed the dastardly deed is very clever and knew how to cover up his tracks well."

By this time the detective reached the window. The fog had partly cleared away and the sun was trying to shine. As the detective stooped down and examined the ground an exclamation of surprise escaped him, and he said as he bent over farther: "There must have been two persons connected in this affair, for here are their footprints."

He examined the prints closer and exclaimed: "One of these persons was a woman."

Sure enough, there were the heavy footprints of a man and the narrow footprints of a woman. Foss traced the steps to and from the fence in the rear of the house to the window, and to the detective it was now evident that the woman had been keeping watch while the man was doing his work inside.

At the fence the footprints were lost in the sand of the rear lot, and there was no hope of tracing them any farther.

After searching the grounds the detective turned to the house and commenced to examine the servants. One was a Chinaman, while the other was an Irish woman of about thirty years of age. The Chinaman was employed as the cook, and the Irish woman as a maid-of-all-work.

When an officer brought them into the parlor where the detective was they both were so frightened that it was some minutes before Foss could get an intelligent answer from either. At last the Chinaman was able to speak, and the detective said:

"What is your name?"

"Jim Wing."

"What time did you go to bed last night?"

At this question the Chinaman moved uneasily, hesitated somewhat and looked at the Irish woman, whose face was red.

"Did you hear me?" asked the detective in a severe tone.

"Me hear; me hear. Me go to bedee two clock."

"What were you doing up so late?"

The Chinaman looked at the Irish woman again as if he wanted her to help him out. The woman was very nervous, had her apron in her mouth and was biting at the end as if she hadn't had anything to eat for a week and was trying to masticate the cloth.

"Didn't you hear me, Jim?"

The detective was growing angry, while the officers who were standing around were convulsed with laughter. They were standing so that they could see the actions of the woman, who was behind the detective's chair.

"Me hear; me hear."

"Then why don't you tell me what kept you up so late?"

"Bliddy she keep lup late; me lovee Bliddy."

"Git out, ye spalpeen! Yez are lyin'!" Biddy exclaimed, her face as red as a beet.

The detective looked up at this, and when he saw the confusion of the Irish woman and the embarrassment of the Chinaman he could not help but laugh at the ludicrousness of the scene.

After examining them for some time, and gaining very little information about their mistress, Foss came to the conclusion that neither of them knew anything about the murder. Both servants had been in Mrs. Howland's employ only a few months.

The Irish woman said that her mistress had few visitors and that she often heard her say that she had no relatives, and that all of her wealth would go to her son when she died. She never spoke of her married life, and when this was mentioned she always turned the conversation.

The detective allowed the Irish woman and the Chinaman to leave the room, but not before he ordered them to stay at the house until he told them to leave.

Foss was confident that the murder had been committed by a person who must have been familiar with the premises. The person must have known that the widow always kept the pistol on the mantel-piece, because if he had not he would have used his own weapon.

The detective examined the policeman as soon as the servants had left the room, and from him he failed to learn anything more than he knew.

After this the detective made a thorough search of the apartments on the upper floor, but as most of these were unfurnished and only two or three furnished, he found nothing, and returned to the lower rooms, more perplexed than he was before he commenced to examine the servants.

The sergeant had left the house in charge of one policeman, and when Foss came downstairs he found the guardian of the place smoking a cigar and lolling back in a large easy-chair in the parlor.

The detective paid very little attention to the officer and went into the chamber of death again. He looked at the window and found the putty-knife with which the pane of glass had been cut out. This, too, also belonged to the widow, and had been taken from a tool-chest which was in a woodhouse outside the kitchen. This amounted to nothing, and he laid it on the window-sill again.

He next turned his attention to the trunk, and he found that it contained nothing except clothes. The assassin had been looking for something; it was evident from the manner in which the clothes had been lifted out of the trunk, and he had been frightened away by the approach of the officer whose attention had been attracted by the explosion of the pistol.

The detective was about to leave the bedroom when his attention was attracted by the clothes which the murdered woman had taken off before she and the child had gone to bed. These were lying over the back of the chair in a corner of the room opposite the bed. The detective examined the pockets of Mrs. Howland's dress, but found nothing of any account except a few keys, a pocket-book with loose change in it, and a handkerchief.

He left the bedroom and went into the library; everything here was in perfect order. On the table, lying with face down, was a volume of poems which Mrs. Howland had been reading, while drawn up to the side of the table was a large library-chair.

The desk in the corner of the room was closed, and Foss unlocked it with one of the keys he had taken from the widow's pocket. He searched the drawers and pigeonholes in search of papers.

The detective found a number of circulars and unpaid bills, a lot of receipts, an application from a charitable institution for aid, then a number of letters, and finally a sealed envelope, upon which was written in a bold, clerkly hand:

"To be forwarded to
"CHARLES ROSE, Lowell, Mass."

For some minutes the detective stood looking at the envelope and thinking what was the best plan for him to follow. Should he open it or forward it to the man to whom it was directed? After a great deal of consideration Foss concluded that he would keep the envelope for a few days, and accordingly put it in his pocket and resumed his search.

Old letters from church people and homes for the poor

were in abundance, but no will, no legal documents, nothing to show how much the widow was worth could the detective find. He searched the desk in vain for a secret drawer, but all efforts in this direction were in vain.

Foss locked the desk up and was about to depart, when his attention was attracted by a piece of paper which was lying on the floor by the side of the cuspidor. The detective picked it up and, looking into the cuspidor, he found a number of other scraps of paper lying in the bottom.

The scrap he had picked up, as well as those inside of the cuspidor, were of brown paper, the same as that used by a merchant to wrap up goods in.

Foss was about to let the scraps remain in the cuspidor when his eye fell on a piece which had writing on it. Instantly the thought came into his mind:

"These scraps may furnish a clue."

The detective fished the scraps of paper out of the cuspidor, and, placing them in his pocket in an envelope, he arose to his feet and walked toward the door of the room leading into the hall.

As the detective did this he thought he heard the rustling of a dress, and stopped to listen, to see where the noise came from. He stood still a minute and then, with the agility of a cat, he bounded toward the door leading into the front room and threw it open. As he did this he heard the front door slam.

He rushed out of the room, thence into the hall, and finally out into the yard. The detective now looked around him, but could see no one. His eye fell upon the prints of a woman's feet on the earth walk leading from the steps. These had just been made, and were the same as those leading from the window of the room where the widow and her child had been murdered. The detective followed these footprints and found that they led to the street. Standing on the wooden sidewalk, Foss saw that no one was in sight.

That some one had been watching him, and that that some one was a woman, the detective was sure; and it worried him when he thought that she had escaped without his being able to find out who she was.

Foss returned to the house after a vain search among the adjoining houses, and waited until the coroner arrived, when that person took charge of the remains.

Some of Mrs. Howland's friends also came to call, and were horrified when they learned that she and her child had been murdered. Foss questioned each person about what they knew in relation to the widow's antecedents, but none of them knew anything about her excepting that she had bought the house, was supposed to be wealthy, was charitable, and belonged to a number of benevolent organizations.

Who was Mrs. Howland's attorney? This was another thing which puzzled the detective, and in spite of all searching and inquiries he could not find out.

The detective now left the widow's residence and walked leisurely down McAllister street. The fog had all cleared away and the sun shone bright upon the surrounding flowers which filled the air with their sweet perfume.

The thoroughfare was now crowded with carriages and men and women on horseback, all out for their morning ride through the Park and out to Seal Rock and the Cliff House. It was a picture of beauty rarely ever seen excepting in the Paris of America, for most of the drivers were women, who knew how to handle the ribbons well and who drove some fine horseflesh.

Foss paid very little attention to this parade, so engrossed was he with his own thoughts. At another time he would have stopped to admire the horses, but this morning the mystery of the murder baffled him so that he thought of nothing else.

As the detective neared the corner of Laguna and McAllister streets, where the street cars turn into Hayes Valley, there was a loud hue and cry raised; horses and automobiles were quickly drawn to the side of the street, and men and women both cried in confused tones: "Out of the way—a runaway!"

The detective looked down the street and saw, dashing madly toward him, a runaway horse and buggy. The horse was covered with sweat, and gave loud and furious snorts as he bounded forward. In the buggy, clutching the dashboard, was a young woman dressed in white, her long black hair streaming in the breeze, and her face as pale as death, as she tried to catch the dangling reins.

"The horse will trample you to pieces!" cried a voice, but the detective paid no attention to the warning and stood in the street, eyeing the approaching runaway with a look of determination upon his face.

Nearer and nearer came the animal, when suddenly there came a shout of horror from the crowd as the detective made a sudden spring forward and clutched the bit. Back and forth, up and down, from left to right swayed the horse, dragging Hugh Foss with him and trying to swing off the detective's hold. As soon as the detective's feet touched the ground they would hardly rest a minute before he would be dragged up again. But still he held on to the bit, and at last recovered all of his strength, and, on his feet touching the ground, he swung around on the horse's back, caught the reins, and, holding them tight, brought the animal to a standstill.

The buggy was only slightly damaged, while the young lady got off with a slight scare. Ready hands assisted her from the vehicle. Foss proceeded to dismount. As he did so he heard a woman in the crowd say:

"That's a detective."

CHAPTER TWO

STILL IN THE DARK

As soon as Foss heard what was said he turned around to discover the speaker, but there was no woman standing close by. As he was about to turn and speak to the young lady whom he had rescued an elderly gentleman came rushing up, his clothes all covered with dust, hatless, and his forehead bound up in a handkerchief. This newcomer broke through the crowd, exclaiming in a voice full of anguish:

"My daughter—is she killed? Where is she?"

"Father, I am safe, thanks to the courage of this gentleman," the young lady answered as she grasped her father's hand and pointed to where the detective was standing, wiping his brow with his handkerchief.

The detective was about making his way out of the crowd when the father of the girl called him, and said as he came forward:

"I don't know how I shall ever be able to express my gratitude for the timely aid you afforded my daughter. My name is Richard Frazer, and this is my daughter Nellie."

"It was nothing, sir," the detective rejoined. "My name is Hugh Foss."

"Not Hugh Foss, the detective?" exclaimed Mr. Frazer.

"That's who I am."

"I was about to send for you when I returned from my drive. I have some business that I wanted you to attend to."

"I shall be happy to be of any service, Mr. Frazer."

"If you have no objections I wish you would escort my daughter home, and meet me at No. —— California street in an hour's time. I will take the horse to the stable."

"Mr. Frazer, you are badly shaken up and it will not be well for you to try to manage the horse until your nerves are steady. I will take the horse to the stable and you can take your daughter home."

After some protesting this was agreed to; the crowd dispersed, Mr. Frazer and his daughter left, and the detective got into the buggy and drove off.

During the conversation with Mr. Frazer, Foss had scanned the faces of those in the crowd, but all to no purpose. He then drove the horse to the stable and prepared to meet Mr. Frazer at his office on California street.

At the stable the detective learned that Richard Frazer was quite an eminent lawyer, and that he was very wealthy. Foss wondered what the case was which the lawyer had for him to take hold of. The detective entered the lawyer's office and found Mr. Frazer seated at his desk, busily writing letters.

When the lawyer recognized the detective he laid down his pen, arose from his chair, shook hands with Foss and proffered him a chair by his side, saying:

"I want you to take and work up a case that has been puzzling me for over a year. I have employed various detectives and spent a great deal of money, but they all have failed."

"Well, Mr. Frazer, I have never seen the case yet that I was afraid to tackle, and I have always come out successful."

"So I have heard, and I am sorry that I did not send for you before."

"I will see what I can do," Foss responded.

"It is quite a long story, and it will take some time to relate it."

"Had we better lock the office door?"

Frazer nodded and the detective walked to the door leading into the hall, and, opening it to look around outside, he was thrown face to face with a tall, dark-looking and fashionably-dressed man about twenty-eight years of age, who stood on the door-mat and who appeared to be listening to what was being said within the office.

"Excuse me, sir," the strange man said as he recovered his composure and ran against the detective, so as to make it appear as if he were about to enter the office when Foss opened the door. The detective saw through this little game at a glance, but said nothing as the man continued: "I was just about entering the office to see Mr. Frazer on business."

The detective turned to the lawyer, and, giving Mr. Frazer a significant look, said: "Mr. Frazer, I will call on you later in the day. Good-morning."

Without any more to-do, the detective left the office, closing the door behind him and walking along the hall toward the stairway, making it a point to tread as heavily as possible. Foss did not go downstairs, but stood on the landing for some minutes listening and looking toward the lawyer's office.

"I don't like the appearance of that fellow," the detective murmured. "I am sure that he was listening."

Click! came a noise from the door.

"I wonder what they have locked that door for? This can't be Mr. Frazer's doing," mused Foss. "I will listen and see what they are talking about."

With that the detective slipped on a pair of felt soles over his shoes and noiselessly crept toward the office door. Kneeling on the door-mat, Foss looked through the keyhole, and found that the key was turned in the lock in such a manner that he could see all that was taking place within.

The dark man had just taken a seat at the desk, and as the detective looked into the office he heard him say:

"Now, Mr. Frazer, I would like to have your answer to my proposition of yesterday."

The lawyer was standing before the fireplace with his hands clasped behind his back under his coat-tails. The dark man was facing Mr. Frazer, and a cynical smile lit up his face. His right hand rested upon his leg, while with his left he made gestures.

"Peter Cole, understand once for all that I will never give my consent. My daughter and myself both dislike you."

"Consider well what you are saying, Mr. Frazer," Cole said, as his face assumed a dark and foreboding look. "I want to marry your daughter Nellie, and you must and shall induce the girl to have me."

The lawyer glared at the man who dared to dictate to him, and looked as if he would strangle him if he were goaded much more.

"If you do not," continued Cole, "I will expose you."

"I have done nothing that you can expose."

The man arose from his chair and stepped over to where Mr. Frazer was standing. His hands and fingers closed and opened nervously as he bent forward, a vindictive look upon his face.

"You deny having done anything wrong, eh? Probably you don't remember the Rose affair?"

The mention of the name of Rose caused the detective to start. It was the name that was written upon the sealed envelope which he had taken from the widow's desk, and he bent his ear closer to the keyhole to hear what the lawyer would say. Mr. Frazer, although he was very angry, answered with evident astonishment:

"Cole, I don't know what you have reference to."

"You don't, eh? You're a cool cuss, Frazer. It would be well to use such language and protestations to a person who don't know anything. You can't fool me."

"I don't wish to fool any one. I don't understand you."

"Well, if you are so ignorant I will explain to you."

"I want to be enlightened."

"Do you remember Ellen Rose, the young woman who, through your machinations ten years ago, suddenly disappeared and her family mourned her as lost?"

"I never knew any one by the name of Rose."

"You didn't? It is no use for you to deny it, Frazer, for I have the documents, with your name attached to them. You signed for ten thousand dollars received for using your influence to put Ellen Rose in a convent at San Buena Ventma."

"They're a forgery! I never received any such amount. I never knew any such person, and I would scorn to be implicated in any such affair."

From the lawyer's manner the detective saw that he was speaking the truth, and Foss immediately came to the conclusion that this was a conspiracy against Mr. Frazer which Peter Cole had concocted to make money, or to frighten the lawyer into giving his daughter to the man who now threatened him.

"Well, if you call them a forgery, they are forgery enough to send you to state's prison if produced in court."

"Cole, listen to me! I am too old a man to be frightened in this manner. You are a scoundrel of the worst type. My conscience is clear. I defy you."

"You do? Then inside of one hour you will be lodged in jail, for I have already procured a warrant for your arrest."

(To be continued.)

CURRENT NEWS

GIRLS TRAPPED PRAIRIE-DOGS

Two Victory girls, seven and ten years old, residing at Manzanola, in Otero County, Colo., earned $50 for the Red Cross by trapping prairie-dogs, and making soap of their fats. Mrs. John Howbert, chairman of the Home Conservation Committee of the Food Administratin in Otero County, was in Denver, and told of the success of the Victory girls in helping the Red Cross by this method.

DIFFICULT OPERATION

A throat operation in which the surgeon was forced to use bare hands, having no time to obtain instruments, was performed in the case of the seven-month-old baby of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Stefan, who reside on a farm near Brainerd, Minn. Dr. A. F. Groves, who examined the child, took an escapement wheel of an alarm-clock from the baby's throat. The wheel measured three-quarters of an inch in diameter.

SHE COUNTED EVERY PEANUT

William Fehrman, store manager, Hammond, Ind., hired an ambitious young woman the other day, and put her to work in the basement, with instructions to take an inventory and to count and classify every article. Another day lately he asked what had become of the new employee. She was found in a corner of the basement where peanuts were stored. She had finished one barrel, and asked if a recount for verification would be necessary.

A THIMBLE FAMINE

The war is responsible for a dearth of metal thimbles. France, Italy, Spain and Portugal are absolutely without supplies. Before the war, Lille, Nuremberg and Vienna manufactured thimbles for all those countries, and there are only four manufacturers in England—three at Birmingham and one at Redditch—but the metal shortage has brought their business almost to a standstill. The trade does not consume a great weight of metal, but the number of thimbles on order looks formidable enough. France alone is in want of 450,000 gross.

SAVED BY A BIBLE

"I saw a Bible that saved a soldier's life," writes John Gould, of East Claridon, Ohio, from Italy. "The soldier had the Bible in his pocket when a bullet struck him. The bullet went through 365 pages. You couldn't buy that Bible from him for any amount of money. I am still with my old company. When we arrived here we were showered with flowers. When we paraded we could hardly get through the streets for the crowds. I think Italy is a finer country than France. I don't know what we would do without the Red Cross and the Y. M. C. A."

FIGHTING MOSQUITOES WITH BATS IN THE PHILIPPINES

The idea of fighting mosquitoes, and incidentally providing a source of guano, by the erection of bat-roosts, figured widely in the press some six or seven years ago, in connection with an undertaking of this sort in Texas. It is interesting to learn that this idea has now been taken up in the Philippines, where the Bureau of Science is encouraging the building of bat-roosts as an aid to the destruction of mosquitoes. The bureau has drawn up plans and specifications for this device, which it distributes to any one who will erect a roost.

BIRDS RIDE ON TRAIN

Birds are fast taking the place of hoboes on the brake-beams of trains, according to John E. Sexton, president of the Eureka-Nevada Railroad Company of Palisade, Nev., who arrived in San Francisco, Cal., recently.

Sexton says birds, especially sparrows and linnets, are extremely lazy this year, and instead of flying from the East to the West, are riding the brakebeams.

Citing an instance, Sexton said that about 300 birds riding on a Southern Pacific train passing through Nevada from the East recently, flew from beneath their perches on the coach when the train passed over a rough crossing.

FACTS ABOUT WATCH JEWELS

"I frequently get interesting watches to repair," remarked a jeweler. "Here is one, for instance, with diamond jewels and, would you believe it, notwithstanding the hardness of the diamond, diamond jewels do not wear as well as the jewels found in the ordinary watch, the sapphire or ruby jewels. Many people place an exaggerated value on their watches because the latter have diamond jewels. A few years ago a collector of watches showed me a watch which had been picked up on the battlefield of Waterloo. The watch was a most elaborate affair, having a beautifully-chased movement and diamond jewels. The jewels had actually been worn through by the steel pivot. Diamonds are all right as ornaments, and in the form of bort are very serviceable for many mechanical purposes, but for watch jewels the diamond is more ornamental than useful."

A GROWING FENCE

A fence that has no posts was cited by a lumber expert as an object lesson in the utility of wood. This fence without posts is on the big road near Monroe, Mich.

So many years ago that nobody in this section knows when it was, nor who was the labor-saving genius who did it, this fence was built by forcing split boards between saplings. Then the trees grew.

They kept growing, until now they are of immense size, and deeply embedded in them are the ends of those old rails. It is impossible to tell how far they extend into the tree-trunks. They are weathered, yet they ring as true under a hammer as though just hewn.

It happened that the trees formed a boundary-line for one of the old tracts. The rails were arranged five feet, and the growth of the trees around their ends has created one of the most substantial fences imaginable.

CAVE-DWELLING SNAKES

Until recent times no reptiles were known to have adapted themselves to existence in the darkness of caverns. Now, however, it is known that in the Malay Peninsula a snake, a species of coluber, inhabits certain caverns, feeding upon the bats.

These cave-dwelling snakes attain a length of between eight and nine feet. Their coloring simulates that of the walls of the caverns. The rock is a yellowish limestone, traversed with blackish veins, and these markings and colors are curiously reproduced in the snakes, many of which lurk on the ledges in the semi-darkness near the entrances, watching for the bats.

A NOVEL METHOD

A new apparatus has been designed for threading conduits. It has the advantage of being able to pass around several bends, which would be difficult, if not impossible, with the ordinary fish-tape method. A "traveler" is provided which consists of a series of washers loosely fitting the interior of the conduit. This traveler is connected to a string, or cord, which passes through a tube into a compressed-air tank where it is coiled up on a reel. In service, the tank is first filled with air to a pressure of about 20 pounds by means of a hand-pump, then the traveler is inserted in the conduit, the end of which is sealed by a plug on the end of the tube, and a valve is opened, permitting the air to pass out into the conduit and blow the traveler through, drawing the string with it. This string is then used to draw wire, which, in turn, may be used for hauling a heavy cable through the conduit.

GUMMED CANE GETS BILLS

While Homer D. Van Duyne, paying-teller at the Broad and Market Bank, Newark, N. J., had his back turned when a man at his window inserted a walking-stick tipped with chewing-gum through the grating, and extracted $1,000 in bills. Van Duyne turned in time to see the money vanish, and the stranger dropped it and ran, with the teller in pursuit.

The chase led through the business section of the city. Van Duyne hailed three detectives, who were passing in an automobile, and they joined in. Men, women and children trailed behind. The man vanished into a saloon on Mulberry street, which, the detectives knew, had an unscalable fence behind it and only one entrance on the street.

So when a man, whom Van Duyne identified, emerged he was taken to headquarters and locked up. He said he was Charles A. Letterman, of Brooklyn, N. Y.

CELEBRATES HER NINETY-THIRD BIRTHDAY BY MAKING PIES

When Mrs. J. B. Morris, of Mount Morris, Greene County, Pa., was informed recently that friends would help her celebrate the ninety-third anniversary of her birth, she agreed to a "party"—if she were permitted to bake the pies—and she did. The gathering was a remarkable one, for Major Morris, the woman's husband, is aged ninety-two, and the couple have been married over seventy years.

Both Major Morris, who came out of the Civil War with this rank after going in as a captain, and Mrs. Morris are wonderfully well preserved. Both have retained their faculties practically unimpaired, and read and work constantly. Mrs. Morris, on her birthday anniversary, recited many poems and entire chapters of the Bible which she had learned in childhood. Both Major Morris and his wife believe they will live to pass the century-mark.

TURTLE, 1,000 YEARS OLD, CAUGHT AND FREED

A turtle, measuring six feet from head to tail, and five feet across its shell, the head being fifteen inches in circumference, was caught recently by Japanese fishermen, and released by Ah Long, Chinaman, who paid $55 for the privilege of giving the turtle its freedom. Incidentally, the turtle weighed 600 pounds, and its age was estimated at 1,000 years.

Probably the reason for the purchase and the freedom given to the turtle is that the reptile is a sort of sacred emblem, and the Chinaman who can set one free in the ocean considers himself especially blessed.

An interesting ceremony followed the financial transaction. Ah Long fed the turtle with several bowls of *sake*, the favorite alcoholic drink of the Japanese (prohibition having made little inroads here), and accompanied by as many friends as could be accommodated in two *sampans*, sailed out to sea, and after many prayers were said, the turtle was released.

RATS WISER THAN MEN

Investigators of mining conditions and the peculiar dangers to which miners are subjected recently have taken much interest in the practise of gold miners to make pets of the rats which commonly infest mines. On the mother lode vein of California it has been found that the miners invariably feed the rats and take care of them, believing that the rodents are a source of protection against accidents. This is due, the men say, to the instinct of the rats, which warns them when a tunnel is unsafe. And when the rats leave a tunnel it is almost impossible to get the miners to work there. This recalls the belief among sailors that rats will leave a doomed ship. The miners also have found that rats are much more susceptible than humans to the dangerous gases that so often cause loss of life in the mines. Long before the miners themselves are affected by these gases the rats become sick and show symptoms of distress. So the men keep close watch on the rats' good health.

CURIOUS BEHAVIOR OF ANIMALS IN WAR

Some interesting notes have been made in regard to the behavior of various animals under the terrific conditions of noise, vibration, explosion and other disturbances at the front. Thus, it seems clear, that some kinds of birds, under the dominance of instincts of feeding, nesting, or brooding, behave as if they were indifferent to all the turmoil. Living creatures of many kinds are not in the least impressed by sounds which have no interest for them. To terrific disturbances, which have neither inherited nor acquired "meaning," an acutely sensitive organism may remain quite indifferent.

But another point is raised, says *Nature*, by some observations which refer to the diverse ways in which sheep and cows react to dummy bombs released from an aeroplane. The cows seem entirely indifferent to the "swish" of the falling bomb, but the sheep "invariably scatter in panic." Have the cows a different—more placid—temperament? But how excited they get at times by the buzzing of flies that cannot hurt them. The excitement is probably due to fallacious association with the buzzing of bloodsucking flies which can hurt them; and the suggestion is that sheep are panic-stricken because the swish of a falling bomb is probably not unlike the sound of a bird of prey, say a golden eagle, swooping upon the lambs.

PERFUME FOR DEAD

With a band at the head of the funeral procession, the body of John Williams, who was thirty-three years old, a gypsy, who died at Jacksonville, Fla., was buried in Oakridge Cemetery, Goshen, Ind., recently, on a plot beside the graves of his father, King George W. Nicholas, who died in 1913, near Topeka, Ind., and George Staley, a brother, whose body was brought here two years ago from Seattle.

The widow brought the body here from Jacksonville. It was placed in a copper-lined coffin, and at the morgue here a photograph was taken of the body in the coffin. In the coffin was much money—$5 gold-pieces, bills and small coins—fraternal order paraphernalia of Williams, including his uniform, fez and sword, and a pint bottle of perfume. The fingers of the body were literally covered with diamond rings. There were three mourners—the widow, her seven-month-old child, and a nephew.

On account of the prohibition law in Indiana, the gypsy custom of pouring champagne and wines into the grave could not be carried out. A large crowd witnessed the burial, the total expense of which is estimated at $1,500.

CONCRETE CORN-CRIB TO KEEP OUT RATS

In England, where the scarcity of food has been brought home to the people more than to the Americans, there is a law against having rats in the corn-crib, and a heavy penalty is imposed on any farmer who allows rats in his storage.

Until concrete came into use in the country it was a hard job to keep the unwelcome little visitor out of the corn-crib. The up-to-date farmer is using concrete more and more for building. Its lasting qualities are one big thing in its favor, and in the case of protection against rats, it is about the only practical building material.

The concrete blocks have holes in them for ventilating the building. The floor is of solid concrete and on the sides where the blocks have openings, the inside of the structure is covered with wire mesh. A trench in the center of the floor is built so that the extension feeder of the corn-sheller can be placed in it when shelling out the crib. Short pieces of board are laid over this trench, and are removed as fast as the corn can be shelled. This trench is a labor-saving feature of this corn-crib. It has been found by the modern farmer that concrete is the only effective way of fighting rats.

WOODEN CANNON STILL USEFUL

A weapon of war and the high explosives used in them would naturally suppose a wooden cannon of little or no use.

Wooden cannon have been used with considerable success in Cuba, Hayti and the Dominican Republic.

The wood used is very tough, having a twisted grain that curls about the log in such way that to split the timber with the ordinary means is almost impossible.

The best trees are selected, and a piece of the log, five or six feet in length and about one foot in diameter, is cut. After the bark has been removed and the log made perfectly round, it is swung up on a crude truss, and a hole is burned into it from one end. The long is wound with fresh rawhide, which shrinks and hardens. When the cannon is covered, another layer is wound on, after certain treatment, and this is continued until the weapon has increased several iches in diameter.

Then the weapon is treated to a hot blast, which tends further to contract the hide binding until it becomes almost as strong as wire.

These crude cannon have been employed with effect in a number of instances, and it is astonishing, so it is said, how many times they can be fired before they burst or are disabled.

SANE, BUT SHE WORE BOY'S STREET-CLOTHES

It took a sanity commission in Chicago to disclose the perfidy of Miss Anna Bahl. She had most successfully duped citizens here, at Serene, Ill., and at Ottawa into believing she was a boy.

Attired in the dapper raiment of the male species, she dazzled the staid populace with her audacity. As a pool-player, farm-hand, and, yes, even prize-fighter, she had no equal. All contenders fell before her, easily vanquished. This, despite her youthfulness and stature. For she is but seventeen, and weighs only 117 pounds, and stands just five feet in her stockings.

But she tired of being a "regular" fellow in a "hick" town. So "Jack," Anna's *nom de plume*, migrated to the wicked Chicago city. There she continued her masquerade. Finding employment as a bellhop in a hotel, "Jack" smoked cigarettes with a perfect abandon. "He" even used a few swear-words—choice swear-words—when the occasion arose. And it was during one of these occasions that Anna met her Waterloo. Guests became suspicious. Investigation proved disastrous, and the sanity commission followed. The verdict?

"Perfectly sane."

"But you must go out of here dressed as a girl," she was told. To this she replied: "Honest, now, I just can't wear 'em."

PURPOSE OF GOVERNMENT SAVING CAMPAIGN

To make war-taught thrift and the practise of saving through lending to the government a permanent and happy habit of the American people, the United States Treasury will conduct, during 1919, an intensive movement to promote wise spending, intelligent saving, and safe investment.

The immediate and concrete objective of the campaign is to encourage the public to continue buying War Savings Stamps and Liberty Bonds, and thus supply funds for meeting government obligations arising from the war. It is essential to a sound economic program that smaller savings, as well as larger capital, share in financing government operations.

The fact that 30,000,000 people—men, women and children—through ownership of government securities now have a direct personal share and interest in the government; whereas, before the war only 300,000 people had such direct financial participation, also constitutes a civic asset too valuable to lose.

The ultimate objective is so to popularize thrift that one of the most valuable lessons taught by the war will become a happy everyday national habit. The result would be a people who spend freely, but who think before they spend, in order that they may get full value.

Wise spending involves weighing present needs and desires against future needs and desires, while intelligent saving and investment provide for future spending, whether to cope with rainy-day emergencies or to take advantage of sunny opportunities.

Practice of these principles will clearly make for family stability, increase individual credit and buying power, and will directly and necessarily contribute to community and national wealth and prosperity."

To accomplish these several objects, there must be added to the war appeals, which were such potent factors in the sale of $1,000,000,000 of War Savings Stamps in 1918, motives of post-armistice and everyday peaceful patriotism.

A CURIOUS PHENOMENON

A remarkable calcareous formation is to be found in Algeria, about sixty miles from Constantine, the ancient Cirta. It looks like a magnificent cascade with the water in violent motion pouring over a rocky cliff in turbulent and riotous confusion, and yet the cascade is motionless and silent. It is as though a great waterfall had suddenly turned to stone. Naturally, the natives look upon this phenomenon with great awe. They have given it the name Hamman-Meskhutin, which means "the bath of the damned." They have a legend that the waterfall was turned to stone together with the members of an impious tribe who had incurred the wrath of Allah. At night these petrified individuals, according to the story, are restored to life and resume their normal shapes. The petrified waterfall has been produced by calcareous deposits from hot sulphurous and ferruginous mineral springs. The springs have a temperature of 95 deg. Cent. The deposits have, of course, been making for many centuries. The hot springs were known to the ancient Romans.

VALUE OF AMBERGRIS

A hundred pounds of ambergris was recently seized at Seattle as stolen property. The appraised value is $30 an ounce, or $48,000 for the hundred pounds. A hundred pounds of pure gold would not be worth as much as $16,000. And were a hundred pounds of gold to be stolen at Seattle a great stir would be made about it. Ambergris is scarcer than gold. It is more of an uncertain quantity. It is harder to find, and harder to transport. It is found floating in lumps in the ocean, and occasionally in the intestines of the *spermaceti* whale. There are, however, few sperm whales available, and the lumps of ambergris have been growing scarcer as the whales have decreased in number. The price has advanced, but ambergris always sold well. A piece weighing 130 pounds, found inside a whale killed near the Windward Islands forty years ago, sold for $2,500 on the spot, and for much more when it reached market. The Dutch East India Company paid the King of Tidore a fortune for a lump of ambergis weighing 182 pounds. Forty and fifty years ago, when ambergis was worth $5 an ounce, it was as much a center of thieving, intrigue, and plans as diamonds. In hundreds of cases sailors in the Caribbean Sea and in Bahama waters became involved in serious trouble through attempts to steal lumps of ambergis. In the old time it was made the subject of sea-fights, and now it is worth six times as much as it was forty years ago, men plot to steal it as they would plan to rob a bank. Adventurers watch for vessels carrying 100 or 200 or 500 pounds of ambergris as train-robbers watch trains carrying gold east or west. Little wonder is it then that the Puget Sound country is as much disturbed over the stealing of 100 pounds of ambergris as it would be over the stealing of a cargo of gold from the Klondike. Ambergris in this day is worth more than its weight in gold.

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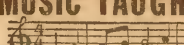

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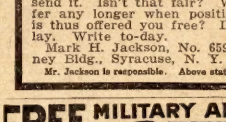

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